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**GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE
TEXTS IN TANZANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

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PhD

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Declaration

I, Elizabeth Kilines Sekwiha Gwajima, certify that this thesis is my own work.

Signature.....

Supervisors:

1. Professor Sheila Riddell

Signature.....

2. Doctor Joan Cutting

Signature.....

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Abbreviations

BDPA:	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
BEST:	Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EFA:	Education For All
GCE:	The Global Campaign for Education
ICPD:	International Conference on Population and Development
IIEP:	International Institute for Education Planning
INSET	In-service Training
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MDG 3:	Millennium Development Goal Three
MKUKUTA:	Mkakati wa Kukuza Uchumi na Kuondoa Umaskini Tanzania (Swahili for the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty)
MoEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoEVT:	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
PEDP:	Primary Education Development Plan
SEDP:	Secondary Education Development Plan
URT:	United Republic of Tanzania
VDPA:	Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
WWI:	The First World War
WWII:	The Second World War

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ABSTRACT

The study explores gender representations in English literature texts used in Tanzanian secondary schools. The aim of this research is to raise awareness of, and contribute to, the general discussion regarding gender equality, and about the meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The goals have been adopted by the government of Tanzania since 2000. The third goal (MDG 3) seeks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in all levels of education by 2015. The aim of this thesis was to examine the discourses underpinning the teaching of literature in Tanzanian schools in order to examine the extent to which gender representations within the texts, and as mediated by teachers, supports this discourse of equality. The inquiry is explored through a textual analysis of the texts which were used in secondary schools in Tanzania during observation, using postcolonial and feminist perspectives. The study further involved interviewing literature teachers and students, policy makers and curriculum planners and obtained their views about the representations of gender. Data were collected in six schools in three regions of Tanzania, namely Mwanza, Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. Analytical induction has been used to analyse the data collected from interviews and observation.

Findings from textual analysis show that some of the texts selected for study do convey strong messages in favour of demarcation between women's and men's traits, roles, and occupations, but others do not. Most of this latter group criticise traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity portraying women as subordinate to men and victims of domestic violence, and traditional African practices such as arranged marriage, female genital mutilation and the denial of educational rights. Findings from observations revealed that the texts were tackled relatively uncritically. Teachers rarely encouraged pupils to engage critically with gender issues arising in the texts. Findings from interviews and observation revealed that teachers are not trained to include the goal in their teaching.

The thesis concludes that although some of the literary texts have emancipatory aims as revealed in the textual analysis, the gender equality goal is unlikely to be achieved unless the implicit understandings of gender relations in teachers' classroom practices are addressed. Recommendations are made on how to promote a more critical engagement with gender issues through the teaching of literature in the Tanzanian context.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“Full gender equality would imply that girls and boys are offered the same chances to go to school and that they enjoy teaching methods and curricula free of stereotypes and academic orientation and counselling unaffected by gender bias” UNESCO (2003: 5).

Introduction

This study explores gender representations in English literature texts used in Tanzanian secondary schools. It seeks to examine how gender is represented in the literary texts used at Tanzanian ordinary secondary school level, to examine how the literary texts are tackled in classroom context by teachers and their students, and to obtain views from key actors about the representations of gender and the criteria for the selection of the literary texts. I am interested in the contribution of culture to social and economic development of Tanzania, in particular to the goal of equalising power imbalances between men and women and enhancing women's position in society. However, engagement with the texts is likely to be challenging in poor schools where few books are available.

This chapter commences with a background to the topic. This is followed by a brief overview of Tanzania. In order to understand the real picture of the contemporary education system, the next section describes the historical overview of education in Tanzania in pre-colonial education, and during colonialism and post-independence, whilst the next part examines the current education structure, focusing on the English curriculum in secondary education and the teaching of literature. Following the education system overview the chapter explores the elusive concept of 'globalisation' as it is associated with Tanzanian economic policies such as Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), and educational policies, such as the medium of instruction in secondary schools. The next section deals with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), focusing on Goal Three, which relates to gender and is connected to the research questions that follow. The chapter ends with describing the contribution of the current study and the structure of the thesis.

Background to the topic

The gender topic grew out of my own personal interest and curiosity with the way the Tanzanian educational system tackled the issue of gender and the way little research has been done on literary texts in Tanzanian secondary school classrooms. To a large extent, it is my experience in teaching that fuelled such an interest, as well as my interest in books about, and by, women. I taught literature in secondary schools in Morogoro and Dar es Salaam for ten years, and also visited other schools in Mwanza and Dodoma regions during my practical training while studying at the University of Dar es Salaam from 1997 to 2003.

At University, I assisted in teaching an 'African Women Writers' course to third year undergraduate students. The course introduced me to writers such as Elieshi Lema in *Parched Earth* (2001); Tsitsi Dangarembga in *Nervous Conditions* (1989); Nawal El Saadawi in *Woman At Point Zero* (1979); Mariama Ba in *So Long a Letter* (first published in French, 1979: English translation, 1981); and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004). These texts describe the dynamic of Tanzanian, Zimbabwean, Egyptian, Senegalese and Nigerian women, respectively. They discuss the complexity of life in both traditional and modern African societies, where women attempt to find their voices and seek liberation in all spheres of life, and especially in education. All these works raised important gender issues in a way that made me question why these writers are not represented in the secondary school syllabi.

Regarding gender studies in Tanzania little has been done on English literary texts in secondary schools. Mabala (1993 & 2004) analysed gender in Tanzanian Kiswahili fiction on the basis of what he termed 'the old patriarchy' as he describes the situation of the irresponsible fathers in families and the suffering mothers; and the 'new patriarchy' where he argues that writers depict the corrupt leaders of the nation. He concludes by arguing that the Swahili novelists reflect the gender stereotypical attitude of their society; although he argues that these authors may not be sexist but that their attitude is as a result of their socialization in the society. He adds that the authors of such novels are not only depicting the reality but also critical of both traditional and modern patriarchies. It is, however, pivotal to explore how teachers mediate the texts, which is the focus of this study.

A recent study by Mwaifuge (2009) deals with Tanzanian fiction in English with texts which are not used in the school curriculum. He examines the influence of political ideologies: liberalism, *Ujamaa* (familyhood), neo-liberalism and patriarchy on Tanzanian prose fiction in English. His findings reveal that all four ideologies used by the authors have considerable influence and he concludes that these ideologies are employed by the dominant class for their own benefit to oppress the majority.

Another body of study deals with non-fictional texts, the reference books used mainly in primary schools. Mbilinyi and Omari (2000) disclose some elements in the school curriculum which perpetuate gender imbalances in favour of boys by presenting men as important thinkers and heroes, for example, in history as investors, fighters and discoverers, while there is little or no mention of women. Mbilinyi (1993) states that most names and illustrations in Mathematics and Science texts in primary schools show images of men. Whenever women appear they are given domestic roles.

A similar study was conducted recently by Yahya-Othman et al. (2009, Initial report), who looked at the gender responsiveness in language use in textbooks for primary schools in Tanzania. In general, their findings reveal that although there have been obvious efforts to balance gender representation such as having 'neutral topics', gender bias in the areas of roles, activities and ownership is still prominent.

Another direction of research is shown by studies conducted in Tanzania on gender and the media (see for example, Shartiely, 2003; Mbilinyi and Omary, 1996; Mbilinyi, 2000; Besha, 1998; and Creighton and Omary, 1995). These discuss gender portrayals in the print and mass media and how such portrayals influence people's behaviour. In general, these studies reveal that the media portrays and reinforces unequal gender relations in different ways and conclude that in commercial advertisements, in particular, the words used often portray women as being passive, submissive, emotional, tender and mere objects of sexual desires. It is obvious, therefore, that the portrayal of these media models is in direct contrast to the portrayal given of men, and this undoubtedly has a direct impact on children who are not mature enough to have considered opinions.

Studies in Tanzania have shown that gender identity is constructed in a variety of ways including through language and that gender stereotypes are evident in sayings and metaphors used in everyday life. For instance, Swila (2004) identified sayings such as ‘unalia kama mwanamke – you are always crying like a woman’ or ‘akili ya mwanamke sawasawa na ya mtoto – the intelligence of a woman is like that of a child’ (pp 28-29). Such sayings, she argues, reinforce the societal belief that a woman is always weak. Swila also revealed the tendency for girls to be told to obey their younger brothers, since boys have greater control over family matters than their elder sisters.

Omari (2004) gives an example of how spoken language, as well as literature has been used to construct gender roles. In Tanzania, for instance, when a mother is asked what the sex of her child is, she would reply ‘a soldier’ meaning that it is a baby boy (p.34). Although Omari does not give an example of what a baby girl would be called, it is common in Tanzania to hear expressions such as mrembo – a beautiful one, or mke – a wife, for a baby girl. In other places they would refer to a baby girl as someone who will bring the cattle home, through the bride wealth when she gets married. As for boys, a mother would say that she has delivered someone to take care of her during her old age, which means a boy. Girls grow up hearing such utterances from their parents such as ‘don’t annoy your brother, he is the one who will take care of me while you will be taking care of your man’ and boys would be told not to annoy ‘someone’s wife’, which means her sister. This is what early feminists were up against – women being facets of men rather than being actors, and in this example being defined according to their own right, rather than simply being the wives of men (see, for instance, Moore, 1988). As a result of parents’ attitudes towards the roles and destination of their boys and girls, children grow up in environments which have already shaped their future destinies. Boys are considered to be the future of their family and clan, as opposed to girls who will marry and join other clans.

A boy’s life at home is totally assured through daily language and practice that he belongs to that family, whilst a girl’s life is defined as transitional. Although she is part of the family and ‘loved’ as Ngcobo (2007) argues, her main role is to be

prepared for her marriage mission, and her life is geared towards that time where she will be transferred to another family - a journey motif, which most African girls are very excited about. However, Ngcobo (2007) posits that 'disillusionment awaits them for they will never really belong anywhere' (p.534), simply because a girl will always be considered as an outsider in any marriage.

All these works discussed earlier fuelled my interest to undertake the current inquiry focusing on literary texts in secondary school classroom contexts.

Tanzania overview

Figure 1.1: Map of Tanzania



Source: judgehensley.wordpress.com/2008/05/27/itinerary/ (last checked May 2008)

The name Tanzania was born on the 26th of April, 1964, when two sovereign states united to form one country: the mainland Tanganyika and the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia were united to form a United Republic. Dar es Salaam, which etymologically means ‘Bandari Salama’ (Haven of Peace), is Tanzania’s main commercial centre whilst Dodoma is the official capital with the parliament and the Prime Minister’s office located there. Tanganyika became independent in 1961 from the UK administered UN trusteeship, while Zanzibar obtained independence on the

10th of December, 1963. The United Republic of Tanzania, which has 26 administrative regions, is situated in Eastern Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean between Kenya and Mozambique. There are a number of countries bordering Tanzania such as Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Malawi. Tanzania is the thirteenth largest African country and is the largest of the East African countries. Tanzania has a total area of 945,087 sq km; an area bigger than Belgium, France, Switzerland and Italy put together (Svendsen and Teisen, 1969). But the largest part of its area lies on high ground and much of the country's area is very dry, receiving only one rainy season, a disadvantage for most Tanzanians who depend heavily on agriculture for food and cash crops.

Since 1964, Tanzania's population is estimated to have tripled to 41.3 million people (<http://www.wateraid.org/uk/> last checked November 2010). About 40 percent on the mainland are Christians, 35 percent are Muslims and about 20 percent practise traditional beliefs; whilst virtually 99 percent of the native people in Zanzibar are Muslims. There are over 120 native languages in Tanzania and Kiswahili is the national and official language; also the first language or mother tongue to most Tanzanian youth. Moreover, Kiswahili is increasingly becoming a *lingua franca* of eastern and central Africa. However, the population is currently threatened with the ongoing pandemic disease AIDS, which has spread rapidly throughout the country and neighbouring areas. AIDS affects the country's labour power with people between the ages of 18-45 dying every year, women being the most affected. In addition, typhoid and malaria have had a very negative effect on children under five and pregnant women, resulting in a higher infant and woman mortality rate, and thus lowering population and growth rates.

On the other hand, the urban population is growing very fast. This poses challenges to initiatives such as the aim of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and now Education For All (EFA), to enable all children to attend school in order to gain skills to improve their lives whether in urban or rural locations. Most boys and men are migrating from poorer rural to more affluent urban Tanzania seeking for 'green pastures'.

Demographic data reveal that 85 percent of the population in Tanzania live in the rural sector and more than half of these are women (Shao and Mukangara, 2008). Approximately 74 percent of the Tanzanian population derives their livelihood from agriculture, the majority being small holder farmers who constitute over 95 percent of the farm holdings, produce more than 90 percent of the food and account for 99 percent of the cultivated land. More than half of these smallholders farmers are women and 74 percent of those engaged in agriculture are poor (Poverty and Human Development Report, 2009). Tanzania continues to be poor by regional standards, having a GDP per person of \$440 in 2008, compared with the sub-Saharan Africa's average of \$746 (World Bank, 2010).

It is estimated that 18.7 percent of Tanzanians live below the food poverty line and 35.7 percent live below the basic needs poverty line. Generally, Tanzania is still a predominantly rural and agrarian society, which makes land the major means of production. Most people experience abject poverty. Among the total poor population, the urban poor constitute about 15 percent compared to 85 percent in rural areas (URT, 2009). Therefore, poverty is more prevalent in rural areas, where the majority live and practise small scale farming. Although agriculture is claimed to be the backbone of Tanzania's economy, source of food and self employment, majority still use very poor farming facilities like hand hoes. Only a few farmers would cultivate their land using tractors and oxen plough. Yet the big challenge here is this: the agricultural practice mostly depends entirely on rainfall which is nowadays very unpredictable and unreliable due to impacts of global warming and climate change. In the light of this, the reality for many Tanzanians, with an exception to a very small economically upper class, is that life is difficult even to people who dwell in some regions in Tanzania that are generally considered 'prosperous' like Kilimanjaro (see Vavrus, 2005). In such a context, corruption is high in Tanzania especially in public services. The National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA) (2009) indicates that a sustained rate growth of between 6 to 8 percents is needed to reduce poverty in Tanzania. This strategy is underpinned by the notion that economic growth is a precondition for poverty reduction.

Despite the fact that the rural sector is central in the national economy, the relations of production prevalent therein are still patriarchal in nature; there is gender imbalance in regard to those that design and facilitate development in the rural sector (Shao and Mukangara, 2008). It is also clear that there are gender disparities in access to, and control of, directly productive assets such as land and credit, human capital in the form of technology, health and education; women's inequality in household decision making, community and public participation is a well – documented fact. Since women constitute the major part of the rural agricultural labour force, the majority tend to be poorly educated.

Most girls are caught up with agricultural and domestic chores in their everyday lives. Most girls are also denied their right to education either because of the myth¹ that educating girls is of no importance since their destiny is to get married whereby future husbands will reap the rewards of the girls' education, or for economic reasons, because parents cannot afford to send all their children to school. Given the difficult choice of who to educate between girls and boys, parents are likely to educate a boy rather than a girl (Brock-Utne, 2000). Similar to other neighbouring African countries' situation, such as Malawi, as described by Kamwendo (2010), who investigated reasons for girls' poor achievement in schools, girls in Tanzania tend to be overworked by domestic chores such as fetching water from distances, collecting fire woods in forests - for the case of rural girls; cooking, cleaning the house, washing utensils and clothes; taking care of siblings, the elderly and disabled people at home. Even when they are enrolled in schools, girls' attendance tends to be poorer than that of boys because of the domestic activities already pointed out. Actually in Tanzania, this poor attendance is called truancy (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2006), meaning absenteeism. Further, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2008:19) states that, 'the main cause for dropout in primary schools is truancy (66.6%), followed by others (15.6%), death (5.6%), and pregnancy (5.5%)'. Reasons for absenteeism are not further investigated. It is

¹ There is a slogan of parents of this mentality in Pakistan to say that educating a girl is like putting petrol into someone's car (Ramachandran, 1998). Also a Bengali saying which goes 'Caring for a daughter is like watering a neighbour's tree' (Raynor, 2005: 83).

however obvious that remedy is needed in this area, which accounts for many dropouts. Problems facing girls should be addressed. For example, activities that bar girls from attending schooling are also associated with gender based violence such as female genital mutilation, child labour and early marriages (Mbilinyi and Omari 1996, Tumbo-Masabo and Liljestrom 1994, UNICEF 2001a & 2005) and other reasons are poverty, cultural prohibitions, poor quality of education and political circumstances (Unterhalter, 2007). Although truancy is reported to be the leading cause of dropping out, girls are the most affected group as they tend to appear in all the recorded areas of dropout (MoEVT, *Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania – BEST*, 2003-2007). Boys, for instance, are not expelled from school if they make girls pregnant; only pregnant girls are expelled.

Further, even though there have been practical efforts to move towards gender parity for enrolment in primary school level, in secondary and higher education for example, women still have fewer places in secondary education than men, disparity in Science and Mathematics Education (Masanja, 2004), and at the university level they only accounted for about 17% in 2006 (University of Dar es Salaam, 2006).

Research has shown that there is a significant gender gap in access to, and achievement in, school in Tanzania (Kessy 2004, Bhalalusesa 2003, and Brock-Utne 2000). Rising school costs increases the inequalities in access to secondary education where parents tend to adopt the boy preference strategy that once hampered girls from primary school enrolment (Bhalalusesa, 2003). While primary education in Tanzania is free, however, parents have to buy uniforms and contribute to costs for school supplies such as exercise books, pens and pencils, contribution to school buildings and furniture, school guard contribution, remedial teaching, school badge and emblem, identity card fees, health charges, caution money, examination fees, food and travel costs. In reality, poor parents cannot afford such contributions as this burden tends to be heavier than that of school fees. Therefore, fees and other contributions tend to reinforce as well as to widen gender inequalities among poor families versus middle class families, and rural versus urban families. Low income families are highly affected by fees and contributions, this situation suppresses enrolment and the ability to keep children in school, especially girls (Kessy, 2004).

In the midst of economic crisis, such direct and indirect school costs are too high for poor parents to afford sending all their children to school. Most parents are therefore less inclined to invest in girls' education and consequently they choose to support boys. This option creates inequalities in education and in future employment. As a result, girls are severely affected by the economic downturn and they resort to sell their bodies and thus become exposed to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Vavrus, 2005). Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP, 1997: 53) affirms this by saying that girls are more prone since they are seduced to get involved in sex with older men for economical reasons and adds that, 'the poor health of many women, whose overwork and poor nutrition lower their immune system, makes them prone to HIV infections'.

Regarding the political sphere, the government has demonstrated tangible actions to support women's liberation by appointing women in the cabinet. For instance, the current government's cabinet, which was elected in 2010 has 50 ministers among whom 12 are women. Yet this number is still lower compared to other African countries such as Rwanda² and South Africa. Moreover, the assembly has about 270 seats in total, among which about 37 seats are allocated to women nominated by the president. Yet this is one of the challenges facing women in Tanzania that they need to strive for election by popular votes rather than being allocated special seats.

Tanzania Gender Networking Programme maintains that the special seats system is detrimental to women since those allocated the seats tend to have 'more allegiance to their political parties rather than representing women's interests' (TGNP, 1997: 36). Overall, a lot still needs to be done to rectify gender imbalances at national level in different spheres as the marked disparities between women and men in public life are still noticeable in government at the leadership level and in decision-making. Women are under-represented in Parliament and there has never been a female president, vice-president, prime minister or chief justice.

²Rwanda has achieved near parity in the representation of men and women in parliament by 48.8% whilst Sweden has the second highest percentage of female in the cabinet about 10 out of 22 ministers are female. Women in South Africa hold up 44% of seats in the parliament (United Nations, 2010).

Nevertheless in recent years there have been some attempts to increase enrolment for both girls and boys in primary school level. Free primary education, announced in 2003, increased school construction and enrolment in primary schools and additionally, a government bursary programme is aimed at helping poorer students, especially girls, gain access to secondary education.

Moreover, the government has shown tangible efforts to reform the education system to expand access to education. The government through the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) has implemented various programmes, strategies and policies with the view to enhancing equality and improving access to schooling. Such programmes are the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) (2002 – 2006) and the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) (2004 – 2009).

Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) (2002 – 2006) had aimed to expand access to primary education, to improve education quality at that level, to increase pupils retention and completion, to improve institutional arrangements and to enhance capacity building for efficient and effective delivery of education services (URT, 2008). The expansion of primary education has enabled enrolment at primary school level to increase tremendously from 59 percent in 2000 to 97 percent in 2007 and raised pass rates to 70.5 percent from 21 percent of pre-PEDP era (URT, 2008).

However, Regional disparities are quite pronounced. Gross Primary Enrolment varies considerably across regions. The most deprived regions are Dodoma, Shinyanga, Singida, Tabora and Kigoma whilst the five better-off regions are Dar es Salaam, Kilimanjaro, Iringa, Arusha and Morogoro (URT, 2011). The pass rates in Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) also vary across regions. For instance, 72.1 percent and 69.3 percent of boys and girls respectively in Arusha Region passed their Primary School Leaving Examination in 2010 compared to 51.9 percent and 26.8 percent of boys and girls respectively in Kigoma; 70.0 percent and 60.6 percent of boys and girls respectively in Dar es Salaam passed their Primary School Leaving Examination whilst Singida Region that had only 43.3 percent and 35.5 percent of boys and girls passed their examination (URT, 2011). Urban schools perform better than rural schools in most cases. There are no available statistics on the distribution

of education by wealth quintile but generally urban areas are wealthier than rural areas. All in all, PEDP's achievement resulted into increased number of primary school leavers who also needed secondary education, and hence, the introduction of Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) (2004 – 2009).

One of the objectives of SEDP was to raise the transition rate to secondary education by increasing enrolment and attendance at secondary school level. Transition from primary schools to public secondary schools was only 13.1 percent in 2001, in 2002 was 12.2 percent and in 2003 was 20.1 percent (URT, 2011). After implementation of SEDP getting into progress, transition from primary to secondary schools in 2006 reached 60.4 percent and the secondary school Net Enrolment Rate (NER) reached 27.8 percent in 2009 compared to 10.1 percent in 2005. The URT (2011: 64) maintains that: 'there has been an increase in total enrolment (Form 1-6) by 75.5 percent from 1,020,510 students in 2007 to 1,789,547 students in 2011'.

With respect to gender balance, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) at secondary school ordinary level has increased from 0.8 percent in 2007/2008 to 0.9 percent in 2008/2009. For advanced secondary level the Gender Parity Index stands at 1.07 percent compared to 0.7 percent in 2007/2008 (URT, 2009).

SEDP aimed at achieving access to secondary education, tackling equity, retention and quality issues. The rapid increase of enrolment has resulted from the government initiative of constructing at least one secondary school for each Ward all over the country. As a result of this initiative, the enrolment in Government secondary schools increased by 82.8 percent from 829,094 students in 2006 to 1,515,671 students in 2011 (URT, 2011). Moreover, the government during SEDP promoted some primary schools to be secondary schools to serve children of those catchment areas. These schools were built in collaboration with the central government, local government and the local communities. The URT (2009: xiii) maintains that:

'Improvement in gender parity is due to, among others, the construction of girls' hostels which has boosted the number of girls accessing as well as expansion of community secondary schools countrywide'

In most cases, however, these schools [Ward/Community schools] are characterised by poor quality of education due to poor buildings, lack of staffing and staff housing,

poor school amenities, lack of resources, meager wages and low opportunities for professional development. Most of these schools' classrooms have no cemented floors, have no desks and chairs, having students sitting on the ground. Such issues of infrastructure, capacity, quality and equity are arguably the results of constructing secondary schools in local poor communities with limited government support. In fact, the current situation of expansion in secondary schools poses a danger of quality in education being sacrificed to quantity and the concern that the expansion process could widen social gaps between rural and urban areas (Haki Elimu, 2007).

The Tanzanian education system

The Education and Training Policy of 1995 is the major policy guiding education provision in Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008). Among other objectives, the policy commits itself to dealing with the so called 'Crosscutting Issues' (p.5), including HIV/AIDS, environmental education and addressing gender equality.

The current education has some influence from the previous education systems, namely: the pre-colonial (traditional or non-formal education) and colonial education. Thus, it is crucial to briefly give an overview. For instance, it is the colonial schools that were nationalised in early 1960s after independence, and President Julius Nyerere aimed at integrating both aspects: the traditional and formal education as reflected in the *Education for Self Reliance* Resolution in 1967 as discussed later.

Pre – colonial education

To use Fafunwa's et al. (1982: 9) description, 'functionalism' was the main aim of traditional education, whereby children were prepared for family life through a number of initiation rites. Traditional education was a non-formal education, and considered to be useful and relevant as it was based on a lifelong experience in which the knowledge and skills acquired by a person were learnt practically through work, play, entertainment, festivals, funerals and other ceremonies within one's locality.

This kind of education was the principal socializing agent that catered for the majority of the people. In the homesteads the parents were usually the main

educators of their children; and the mother, especially so, particularly of the young children (CESO, 1969). However, one should note here that this type of education did not imply that all children would go to school and learn to read and write. Children were prepared for family life through initiation rites for girls and boys, including military oriented training, religious oriented training and specialised training in certain disciplines such as medicine, hunting, politics, music and traditional rituals.

Colonial education

By way of comparison, the colonial education system was formal. Formal education in Tanzania, as in many other African countries, was initiated by Christian missionaries and their arrival dates back to 1844 (Chau et al.:1975, Kurtz: 1978). Schooling, in general, was a responsibility of missionary societies from North America and Europe (King, 1990) whereas subjects such as Bible knowledge, reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught. At the time, 'the majority of the schools had a religious affiliation in their name or their ownership' (King, 2000: 23). Although most of the schools in this period were controlled by Christian missionaries, there were some Islam Quran schools, which specialised in teaching the Quran and Arabic. There were also government schools. The distinctive feature of these schools during the British rule was that they were divided according to race: there were separate schools for Europeans, Asians and Africans. This division was later to be abolished as it was against the principles of equality and justice promoted by President Julius Nyerere in the education reforms adopted after independence.

The colonial type of education catered for the needs of the colonial state and suppressed the traditional system. It catered for only about 10% of the population (MoE, 1989; population estimated at 13 million in 1970). Nyerere (1968) describes colonial education as being modelled on the British system, but with an even heavier emphasis on subservient attitudes and white-collar skills. Meaning that, its aim was to recruit a few elite Tanzanians to serve the colonial government, and for the church to spread literacy as part of their evangelical mission so that local people could be trained for positions such as junior officials and clerks (see, also, Cameron and Dodd, 1970).

Although the colonial formal education was considered important, it was described as being inadequate for Tanzanian society, and for the majority of people who did not depend on office jobs. Nevertheless, the colonial legacies have influenced the education system of the country in one way or another. For instance, it has been registered that, even during this period, girls' education lagged behind and the British administrators showed this concern. 'Of the 480,000 boys of school age in the territory, only 53,798 attended school' (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 1973, 2001: 99). On the other hand, of the 520,000 females of school age, only 22,560 were at school in 1939 (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 1973, 2001: 99). Until 1960, 'the number of girls grew very slowly' (Ibid, p.132).

Generally, female education was not a priority for the colonial authorities as a result of the labour needs of local economic systems. Women provided labour in farms and plantations. Surprisingly, while the newly independent Tanganyika launched the Three-Year Education Plan in 1961 to tackle education issues such as the expansion of secondary schools, the improvement of teacher training courses, and the expansion of primary school courses, the issue of girls' education was not tackled.

Post-independence education

At independence only 36 percent of primary school students were girls, 19 percent of middle school pupils were girls and 14 percent of secondary school pupils were girls (Olekambaine, 1991). After independence in 1961, Tanzania institutionalised all schools to be under the government. Since independence, Tanzania has recorded an increase in literacy rates. According to URT (1995), Tanzania achieved average literacy rates of 83 percent in 1995. However, the overall literacy rates have remained lower for women than for men. In 1961 when Tanzania became independent, it is elucidated that 75 percent of the adult population were illiterate (IIEP, 1990).

Since then, Tanzania has made some significant changes in the education system that was inherited from the British colonial administration, by reducing illiteracy and making the education system relevant to all Tanzanians. The year 1970, for example, was declared to be Adult Education Year. It must be remembered that at

independence, Tanzania had two education systems: namely, the traditional system, and the formal education systems, which differed in their objectives, content and methods. Therefore, making some changes was paramount. The broad concept of such change is well reflected in a series of political statements, resolutions, educational policies, development plans and implementation programmes that were issued from time to time. An example of this was the *Musoma Resolution* of 1974 which, among other things, capitalised on the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE), as it was declared important that literacy should become a component of basic education (MoE, 1989).

Prior to the Musoma Resolution, the policy of *Education for Self-Reliance* - ESR (1967) had been introduced. This promoted the idea of compatibility between education and society, so that education and society were seen as being inseparable. It also promoted the integration of formal and non-formal education in order to reflect the lifelong concept of the process of education, whereby an attempt to integrate education with living and working was made. *Education for Self-Reliance*, therefore, became the basis for all major educational changes in the country, and outlined all the aims and objectives of education in Tanzania.

It should be pointed out that by the time of independence in the 1960s, ideologically, the country, under the leadership of the first president Julius Nyerere, had aspired to build *Ujamaa*, a particularly African brand of socialism. *Ujamaa* is a Kiswahili word equivalent to 'familyhood' - the concept that is the foundation of Tanzanian socialism, which was on the basis of the *Arusha Declaration*, which preceded *Education for Self-Reliance*. According to Nyerere (1968) in his book *Freedom and Socialism*, the kind of society to attain to was a socialist one, where everyone would value work and devalue exploitation; where national resources would be shared with fellow Tanzanians; and where issues of equality would be observed. In the curriculum, for instance, as well as being an essential part of the curriculum, the role of teaching literature at post independence has also been a visible platform for highlighting political issues throughout history in Tanzania. Literature has also been used to promote the shared ideas of socio-cultural and political thoughts in Tanzania.

Kiswahili and English novelists, playwrights and poets have written critically of the country's policies and ideology.

It should be remembered that, after independence in 1961, major curricula changes took place to reflect the *Ujamaa* ideology or familyhood. Emmanuel (2003: 4) states that 'literature was thought to play an important role in developing the social, cultural and political values of Tanzania'. In addition, since Tanzania is 'officially socialist' in ideology, the curricula to date have stressed gender equality, and have claimed to be supportive of liberating women. However, by the 1990s, the situation was that 'the large majority of the texts were filled with gender stereotypes' (Mabala 1993: 8). Therefore, in a modern global world where concepts such as equality and human rights are assumed to be the right of every citizen and where the world expects high standards in the development of equality, the study is interested in examining the current situation in Tanzania with regard to the literary texts and the mediation of teachers to those texts used schools.

If we take the country's official ideology into account, it can be argued that the Tanzanian *Ujamaa* remains pivotal to education as far as gender studies are concerned, simply because it strongly supports the concept of liberating women in different arenas of development by building a socialist society based on equality and respect for human dignity. However, a recent study argues the case that the *Ujamaa* ideology has failed because of the corrupt nature of the country's leaders who dominate the majority of poor citizens (Mwaifuge, 2009) and obviously, the ideology has increasingly become unpopular among Tanzanians. In fact, it is not known what kind of ideology the country follows now, since the country shifted from its previous reliance on control mechanisms to a predominantly market orientation as advocated by liberalization policies. Notably, on a positive note, there is a substantial rise in the number of private schools and growth in the informal sector in general. The differences between the government and private schools are explored in the next section.

Structure of the current education system

At this juncture it is important to briefly highlight the structure of the current system of education³ and to give a socio-political overview of Tanzania. This will help us understand the context within which education policies and literature curriculum issues operate in the country. Before that, the organs responsible for education in Tanzania are briefly described.

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) is primarily responsible for the education system in Tanzania; the ministry was formerly known as the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). Two further core institutions that work together with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training are the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), and the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA). The Institute of Education is charged with the responsibility of ensuring the quality of education in Tanzania at pre-primary, primary, secondary and teacher education levels, and is responsible for curriculum design and development, whilst the National Examinations Council is responsible for the administration of all national examinations. It also awards a diploma in primary, secondary and post secondary education, but excludes Universities (see <http://www.necta.go.tz>, last checked March, 2010).

The structure of formal education in Tanzania is 2-7- 4-2-3+ years. That is, two years of pre-primary education, seven years of primary education, four years of Junior Secondary education, known as Ordinary level (O' level), two years of Senior Secondary or Advanced level education (A' level), and a minimum of three years of Tertiary Education.

Primary education is a seven year education cycle after pre-primary, which is not compulsory. It is considered a constitutional right to all children in Tanzanian, beginning, at standard one and ending at standard seven. It is compulsory for both girls and boys between the ages seven to thirteen and parents are liable to be fined if

³ Sources: Ministry of Education and Culture (2005) *English Language Syllabus for Secondary Schools*, Dar es Salaam.
Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2008) *BEST*, Dar es Salaam.

they do not take their children to school. The standard seven examination marks the completion of the primary education cycle, and those who pass the examinations would be selected to join the secondary education cycle.

While primary education is free, secondary and higher education is not free. But compared with government schools, the students who attend private secondary schools in Tanzania pay very high fees, around 1,000,000 Tanzanian Shillings (around \$ 750) per term and about 20,000 Tanzanian Shillings (around \$15) per term for government schools. Normally, an academic year has three terms.

All secondary schools in Tanzania are academically selective, that is, selection and enrolment is made on the basis of a pre-set standard cut-off point of performance in the national primary school leaving examination. The selection and enrolment at an advanced secondary school level is based on a prescribed performance level in the relevant advanced level subject combinations, after attainment of appropriate credits in the certificate of secondary education examination. Examinations at forms four and six (secondary four and six) mark the completion of the secondary education cycles, while the results of these examinations are used for the selection of students for further formal education and training, and for certification (MoEVT, 2008).

According to MoEVT (2005), secondary schools in Tanzania may enrol only boys, or only girls, or be co-educational. However, the majority of government and private schools are co-educational.

However, the private schools, especially those known as “International” schools or “Academies”, do not always rely on the results of the National Examination Council of Tanzania to enrol students in their schools. Selection in these schools is based on entry examinations and interviews. They do provide another examination or proficiency test to select and enrol those candidates who achieve the best results. The proficiency test is an educational activity used to measure the degree of skill with which a person can use a language, such as how well a student can read, write, speak or understand the language (Richards et al, 1992). International schools or Academies are those private schools which advocate the use of English as a language of instruction and communications in their schools, thus for them proficiency tests are deemed vital. In Tanzania today, the situation is that there is a rapid expansion of

these private English medium schools, mostly in urban areas. As English is the emphasis, the schools are considered the best for the middle class students. In addition, the general environment is conducive for studying: they have good buildings, small sized classes and enough staff and are stocked with resources like books and computers. In contrast, most government schools in urban areas are those buildings built by the Germans and British before the 1960s and have never been upgraded since their creation, whilst those in villages are built by parents and volunteers and they admit primary school failures. These have mixed-ability streams admitting many students in one classroom. Moreover, students in such schools are socially and economically disadvantaged. One of the notable problems in the government schools in Tanzania is the acute shortage of teaching and learning resources and shortage of teachers (see chapter six of this thesis).

Globalisation in Tanzania

The impact of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs)

In discussing the education system in Tanzania, it is difficult to avoid touching on aspects of globalisation, which have a direct influence on the system. Globalisation is ‘the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economies’ (Stiglitz, 2002: ix). It refers to socio-cultural and economical changes that have happened for the past twenty years in the world in areas such as information technology (Castells, 2000), worldwide social relations (Giddens, 1990) and global partnership (Bush, 2007; Gould, 2005; Mosse et al., 2005). Although the United Nation’s Development Programme (1998:6) defines globalisation as ‘a process that integrates consumer markets around the world and opens up opportunities’, it warns that it also creates new inequalities and new challenges with regard to the protection of consumer rights. Lingard (2000) puts forward the assertion that, since the 1990s, globalisation has impacted on education worldwide. In line with this view, this thesis argues that the educational and economic trends in Tanzania have been influenced, among other factors, by globalisation.

The last quarter of the twentieth century saw a wave of economic policy reforms in the less developed countries with one country after another assuming liberalization reforms. Tanzania’s wave of political-economic reforms, which began in the 1980s,

has brought about the foundation of an economy that increasingly relies on private sector enterprises and market forces for growth and development, these being imposed by international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Meanwhile, globalisation is widely considered as the prominent driving force of the twenty first century as the consequence of a changed world economy system.

Globalisation is a fact, which has arguments for and against. Its significance and impact is still debatable, but has been widely discussed by different scholars. For instance Stiglitz (2002: 3) argues that the way globalisation has been managed by the World Bank and IMF poses critical concerns. For instance he points out that the international trade and policies such as SAPs 'that have been imposed on developing countries are driven by ideology', and that 'the developed countries force the developing ones to open up their markets to the goods of the advanced industrial countries while keeping their own markets protected' (see also, for instance, Block & Cameron 2002; and Altbach 2004). It should be noted that just as globalisation is not a straightforward and homogenous process, then neither are its effects, which play out differently in the developed and underdeveloped parts of the world.

This growing global initiative has clearly influenced economic policies in Tanzania, as is the case in many other countries around the world. Tanzania relies heavily on foreign donors for its development, although aid is often given with attached conditions, such as to reform its policies (Mushi, 1995). A good example of this is the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) which caused Structural Adjustment Programmes in Tanzania. These are macroeconomic policies advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s. Structural Adjustment Policies targeted the government to improvise poverty alleviation, introduce policies to social development, and long-term visioning exercises. Mbilinyi (2000) describes these Structural Adjustment macro reform policies as a 'blow' (p.46) against the equality in education as they created inequalities in terms of those who are able economically to send their children to school and those who can not afford the cost sharing policy introduced as a result of SAPs. 'One major critique of SAPs is the glaring marginalization of, and impact on, women's need' ((Tanzania Gender

Networking Programme, 1997: 21). Further, Vavrus (2005) explains in detail that privatization of industries and assets, cost sharing and reduction of spending on social services such as education, health and employment has increased social and economic inequalities among Tanzanians. School fees in secondary education, she argues, have affected enrolment whereby 'the proportion of secondary school students whose parents are peasant farmers has declined' (p.185). On employment, Vavrus argues that SAPs affected formal employment after the government privatised the Tanzanian industries and factories, in most cases, to non-Tanzanian people who came with their own non-Tanzanian workers. Many Tanzanians were retrenched from the factories and left without formal employment and hence, 'women have been the first to be retrenched as most are less skilled, few are in decision making and more are in the so-called non-reproductive service sector which is affected by heavy government budget-cuts' (Tanzania Gender Networking Programme, 1997: 21).

Further, Structural Adjustment Policies perpetuated economic strata between the poor and the rich because of trade liberalisation, privatisation and market reform policies (Shivji, 2007). Shivji suggests that globalisation is the opposite of nationalism, and states further that it is just a kind of neo-liberalism that has returned the imperialist system under the guise of globalisation (see also Mbilinyi, 2000).

Despite the negative aspects, the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (1997: 21) lists the advantages of SAPs to women in Tanzania such as 'expansion of the private sector, which improved their economic status, increased knowledge about economic systems, growth of women's groups and NGOs, and avenues for gendered information search and dissemination by increase use of print and visual media'. However it is generally argued that the 1980s, which Kiondo (1995: 109), terms the period as the 'lost decade in Africa', are described as a time that marked the turning point of Tanzania's pursuit to build a socialist country. For instance, one of the measures adopted in order to conform to the World Bank was the requirement to attract foreign investment - one that seemed contrary to the principles of *Ujamaa*. Structural Adjustment Policies restricted public sector growth, which, in turn, led to the introduction of school fees in schools, as pointed out earlier, thus widening the

gap between those who were able to pay and those who were not: the rich and the poor. This raised some important questions for the government. How, for example, would Education for Self Reliance and the ideology *Ujamaa*⁴, which advocated the promotion of equality and justice, go hand-in-hand with more liberal policies and the Structural Adjustment Policies? And would local policies, in time, be influenced by global ones? These are not simple questions to answer, especially in today's world (2010), where systems such as globalisation have emerged. Following these global concerns on development, policies in Tanzania have generally featured the broad, worldwide economical and educational policy trends. Even the *Tanzania Development Vision 2025* links globalisation with the prospect of achieving a high level of education in terms of utilizing the private sector and foreign investors' policies as being the engine for economic growth and the creation of jobs.

Despite the advantages and limitations pointed out in this section regarding the concept of globalisation, this study links globalisation with the concept of gender equality in education.

Education policy on medium of instruction in secondary schools

The current education policy requires that English is the medium of language of instruction from secondary to tertiary levels. This policy has been directly associated with globalisation, as observed by Mwaifuge (2009):

...the country [Tanzania] has kept English as the language of instruction in higher educational levels. Moreover, globalization has prompted many people to advocate the use of English, which is now being touted as the language of the world... (p.9).

With the same line of arguing, Schmied (1986: 109) posits that the official reason given for maintaining English as a medium of instruction – which this study links to globalisation - is that Tanzania must not be isolated from the rest of the world in terms of communication and information technology. The country may also need to attract investors in the education sector and other economic sectors in the increasingly competitive world.

⁴ It is paramount to discuss the ideology of the country since it dictates the kind of education and economic policies to be adopted.

Another reason stated by Rubagumya (1990) is that there is a belief that the mastery of European languages proves that one is educated. Such languages are English, French or Portuguese [although some African countries like Mozambique are considering abandoning Portuguese for English]. 'English and French act as a symbol of quality education, as inspirations to education achievement' King (1990: 215). However, other researchers have maintained that favouring English as a medium of instruction may not necessarily lead to greater proficiency in English among students in Tanzania (Roy-Campell and Qorro, 1997). Moreover, Yahya-Othman (1990), Roy-Campell and Qorro, (1997) and Brock-Utne (2002, 2005 and 2007) have voiced their concerns about using English in school, a language which is not mastered by its users. They have suggested that the debate should shift from arguing for or against one language to the argument that students should be allowed to learn both languages well, but with Kiswahili being the medium of instruction. Brock-Utne's (2007) posits that the policy of using English as a medium of instruction is very likely to be detrimental to the users. Capitalising on the qualifications of students, whom she calls the 'work force of Tanzania', she maintains that the current language policy would not bring about the desirable output.

Kiswahili is generally spoken by all Tanzanians, and has played an important role in facilitating the provision of basic education through instruction in pre-school, primary and out-of-school education. Moreover, teachers and students in school contexts mostly use Kiswahili, instead of English (Trappes-Lomax :1990, Wedgwood: 2007). In fact, the situation described in 1990 and 2007 remains the same as it is today, in 2011. Therefore, it is a paradox to make English the instructional media and a contradiction between the education policy and the reality of the situation in Tanzania.

UNESCO (2009: 114) argues that a 'home language', as opposed to a foreign language, 'is related to classroom success'. Today, the debate on whether Kiswahili or English could make learning better at all levels of education in Tanzania is still a hot topic. English is linked to a good quality of education by most parents in Tanzania and is also linked to the 'image of modernity' (Wedgwood, 2007: 210; see

also Gordon, 1998); parents, therefore, would do all it takes to send their children to English medium schools where English is used, in and out of class. Even the enrolment of students and the selection of staff are heavily based on the language proficiency criteria. However, paradoxically, even the educated people in Tanzania, who no doubt include those proponents of the practice of Kiswahili in education, are sending their children to these same English medium schools, and to such schools abroad.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The 1990s saw a growing interest in the world community towards the general development of societies and, more importantly, in their educational achievement, the interest which this study associates with globalisation. For instance, the Education For All (EFA) campaign led by UNESCO and the World Bank emerged as a result of the international conference on education held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, which proclaimed the right of every person to benefit from educational opportunities. This was further reinforced in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, while support for achieving at least Universal Primary Education for all has been further re-emphasized through the UN Millennium Development Goals in 2000.

The Millennium Development Goals emerged from various political and educational world summits and conferences organised by the United Nations, such as those in Jomtien-Thailand in 1990, and Dakar-Senegal in 2000. Delegates from different governments in the world, including policy-makers, education specialists, and officials representing intergovernmental bodies and Non-Governmental Organisations, met to discuss a number of issues. What emerged from these discussions was the Dakar Framework for Action with the six goals of Education for All, including that of gender. Later in September 2000, the world leaders met in New York to adopt the Millennium Declaration and set out goals and targets to make the Millennium Declaration vision a reality. These goals are known as the UN Millennium Development Goals. They represent the shared global commitment of the international community that was established to improve people's lives, especially those in the world's poorest countries. For their part, developing countries have striven to achieve better government and investment in their people through

health care and education, whilst the developed countries have pledged to support them through aid, debt relief, and fairer trade.

There are eight goals and each has a corresponding target for action. By the year 2015, these goals are: to eradicate poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and the empowerment of women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS and malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and to develop a global partnership for development.

Since the year 2000, Tanzania's policies, as in many other developing countries, have been influenced by the Millennium Development Goals. Tanzanian strategies to improve sectors such as education have been geared towards achieving these goals and progress reports have been issued accordingly. For instance, government reports through the Ministry of Community Development for Gender and Children has insisted on mainstreaming gender issues in the policies, strategic plans, programmes and budget, in a bid to bring about gender equality (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008). Further, Tanzania's statement to the UN presented by Dr. Augustine Mahiga⁵ at the General Assembly, in April 2008, outlines different strategies applied by the country to alleviate poverty, improve health services, and to raise enrolment rates and increase gender parity with regard to the enrolment of girls and boys. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals has not only been pivotal in Tanzania's educational policies, but has also given a central focus to donor agencies policies (Hayman, 2007). Indeed, the concern for gender equality is at the heart of education, which is believed to 'play a critical role in the shaping of gender identity and gender relations' (Atthill et al., 2009: 7).

It is now obvious that education is a central developmental key in attaining the Millennium Development Goals, and is one of the most powerful tools in helping to eradicate gender inequality and 'influence the well-being of individuals and nations'

⁵ Dr. Augustine P. Mahiga is a permanent representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations. He read the statement at the General Assembly thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals, New York, 2nd April 2008. The debate's theme was: 'Achievements, Challenges and Getting back on track in the Achievement of the MDGs.'

(Lauder et al, 2006: 1). Education provides knowledge and empowers women to improve their own lives and of those around them. Yet, ‘the task of achieving gender equality in education at all levels of education by 2010 is more profoundly challenging’ (UNESCO, 2003/4: 115).

Millennium Development Goal Three: promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women

The gender equality goal has been given major prominence and urgency in the Millennium Development Goals. Building on other world forums such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the World Declaration on Education For All (1990) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁶ (1995), the Millennium Development Goal Three in particular, talks about ‘promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women’.

In the *World Declaration on Education for All* (EFA, 1990), article 3 of the document, ‘Universalizing Access and Promoting Equity’, states that:

The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated (p. 5).

Moreover, in 2003, UNESCO reiterated what *Education For All* stressed in 1990, that the goal of gender was a particularly urgent one. It is believed that, in reality, when compared to boys, girls face many more challenges, such as school costs and biases, unfair treatment, and the lack of security and opportunity. Thus, all these different factors require immediate attention.

Additionally, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (2003) emphasized the importance of education for girls. Further, when addressing the UN General

⁶ It is considered to be the most important UN conference on women.

Mrs Gertrude Mongella, a Tanzanian politician and activist, was the UN Assistant Secretary General and Secretary General, at the fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing - 1995.

Assembly in April 2008, the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon⁷, emphasised that the Millennium Development Goals would be achieved once gender equality was also realized. This would involve the economic empowerment of women and their inclusion in decision-making processes at all levels in order to combat discrimination and violence against them. An issue such as gender is cross-cutting: therefore, it can act as a gateway to achieving the other Millennium goals (see also the *Global Poverty Report*, 2002). In fact, ‘none of the other Millennium Development Goals can be achieved without the achievement of women’s equality and empowerment’ as all Goals are directly related to women (Antrobus, 2005: 94). According to Antrobus (Ibid), to achieve Goal 6 on HIV/AIDS, for instance, it is vital that women’s rights on sexual and reproductive issues are maintained. The Global Campaign for Education maintains the same argument:

Because education is so crucial to improving health and increasing incomes, the girls’ education goal has a domino effect on all of the other Millennium Development Goals. Failure to achieve it will lead to almost certain failure of the other MDGs (GCE, 2003: 3).

It was the importance and urgency of this issue that kindled my interest in this area of study.

UNESCO’s (2008) *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* clearly contends that gender equality has been relatively neglected in the vast majority of countries. The report draws on examples from 59 countries (primarily from the sub-Saharan region) out of the 181 for which data are available, and maintains that boys still dominate classroom time, space and teachers’ attention. In many instances the report claims that school textbooks still reinforce the gender specific roles of men and women. It therefore suggests that the imbalances must be redressed if everyone is to benefit equally from the opportunities that education provides.

Similarly, UNESCO’s (2009) *EFA Global Monitoring Report* points out the same gender concerns that there still remain persistent gender inequalities, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab States, where the gender

⁷ He read the statement at the General Assembly thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals, New York, 2nd April 2008. The debate’s theme was: ‘Achievements, Challenges and Getting back on track in the Achievement of the MDGs.’

parity goal has not yet been achieved. As recently as September 2010, the Millennium Development Goals Report observes that addressing the gender goal has been of ‘great importance but a difficult one since the root causes of gender disadvantage and oppression lie in societal attitudes and norms and power structures...’ (UN Summit, 2010: 6).

The criticism of Millennium Development Goal Three

Although the right to education for all as a matter of human right is well articulated worldwide, research and criticism on gender take the empowerment of women a stage further. For instance, Unterhalter (2007) explores the relationship between gender and education, where she links gender equality in education with global social justice and human rights. She expresses the concern that achieving gender parity in enrolment has been a theme that is central to gender studies and that governments’ programmes and aid agencies have been using equal access in gross enrolment as evidence for achieving the Millennium Development Goal Three of empowering women, while leaving crucial areas of that empowerment unexamined such as the teaching and learning processes, text books and general conditions in schools, areas which the current study sought to explore.

It has further been argued the Millennium Development Goal Three is so limited to the aspect of equal access to education or gross enrolment that it cannot tackle other aspects of empowering the women. For instance, it does not tackle issues regarding reproductive rights, violations of human rights and gender violence (Sweetman, 2005). Although ‘Violence acts as a barrier to women’s empowerment’, Millennium Development Goal Three remains silent on this issue (Hayes, 2005:76). Aikman et al. (2005) explore the empowerment of women beyond equal access to schooling; they contend that school curricula and teaching methods should be gender oriented if the Goal is to be achieved.

Moreover, the criticism regarding Millennium Development Goal Three is clearly based on the fact that, the focus of countries is on gender parity in enrolment. The narrow focus is not necessarily the fault of the Goal, but of its understanding and interpretation. Unterhalter (2005a: 16) summarises four distinct frameworks which

provides such different understandings of gender equality, and thus yield different challenges to achieving the Goal (See Table 1.1 below).

Table 1.1: Gender, education and development: contrasting frameworks

Framework	Linked theories	Understandings of gender	Understandings of development	Understandings of education	Understandings of equality
Women in Development (WID) From 1970s to the present	Modernization; human-capital theory	Gender = women, girls	Growth, efficiency, good governance, social cohesion	Schooling	Equality of resources. Sometimes termed “parity”
Gender and Development (GAD) From 1980s to the present	Structuralism; Marxism	Constructed social relations, power	Challenging inequity and oppression	Conscientisation	Redistribution of power, “equity”
Post-structuralism. From 1990s to the present	Post-colonial theory	Shifting identities	Struggling with the past in the present to shape multi-faceted identities and new narrations	Deconstructive	Stress on difference
Human Development From 1990s to the present	The capability approach	Inequality and capability denial	Development as freedom	A basic capability	Equality rights and capabilities

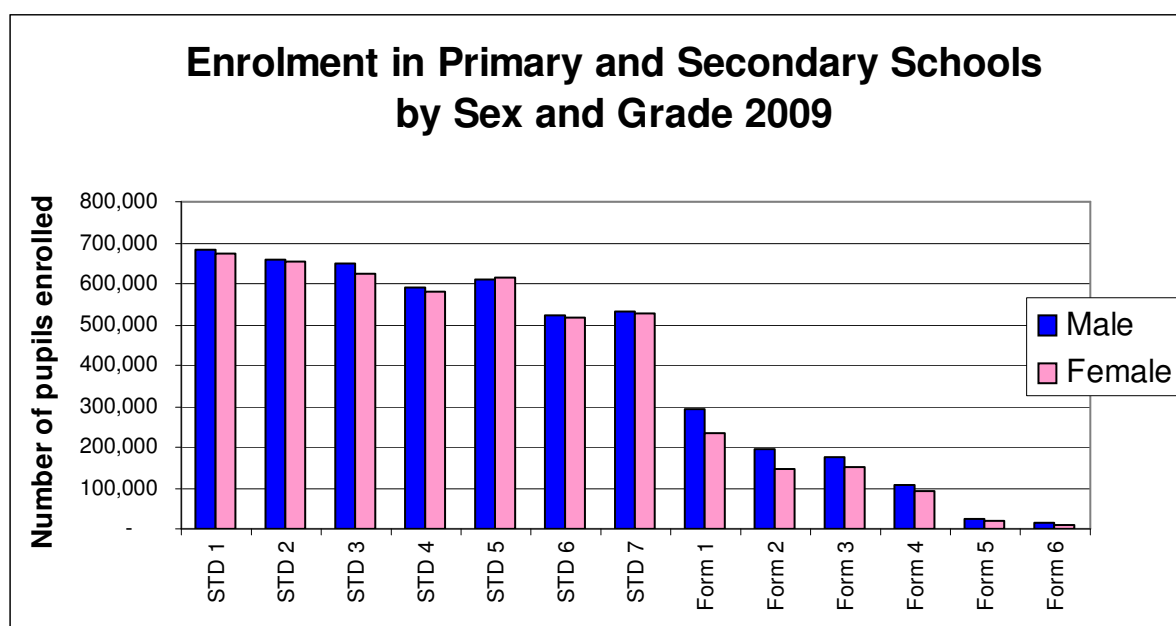
Source: Unterhalter (2005: 19)

Working to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 3, that of gender equality and the empowerment of women, Unterhalter (2005a) critically argues that it is through different interpretations given to the term gender equality in education that yields different approaches to tackling the issue, which is one of the challenges to achieving the goal. As a result, the different approaches have affected the policy planning and implementation. The point Unterhalter is making is that there are close inter-connections between different approaches to development, which are in turn linked to different approaches within education and gender equality.

Drawing inference to Tanzanian situation, misinterpretation of gender equality poses great challenge to achieving it. For example, as a result of deliberate efforts by

Tanzanian government under Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP), it is reported that in Tanzania gender parity has been achieved in primary education level

Table 1.2: Enrolment in Primary and Secondary Schools by Sex and Grade, 2009



Source: Tanzania Education Statistics Briefs 2009 available online at: http://www.tzdpd.or.tz/uploads/media/Tanzania_education_statistics_2009_1_.doc (Last checked 20/10/2010)

Key:

STD 1 is 'Standard' equivalent to 'Primary 1'. Standard 7 is the highest class in primary education level. Form 1 is equivalent to 'Secondary Four'; Form 6 is the highest class in high school.

(UNESCO: 2009 & 2010), (see the table below):

What is obvious from the table above is that the enrolment gap between girls and boys in primary schools is closing. However boys outnumber girls in secondary school enrolment, which is very low for both sexes. Girls' enrolment in secondary school is significantly lower when compared to primary school.

However, 'Tanzania's Gross Enrolment Rates for secondary education are among the lowest in the world' for both girls and boys (Ngobo, 2008:98), and that only ten percent of those who graduate in primary education in Tanzania are enrolled into

secondary schools (Brock-Utne, 2007), girls' rates are generally lower than boys' as shown in the table above. In 2002, before the launch of the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) Tanzania had the lowest secondary school enrolment rate in sub-Saharan Africa, only 6 percent of the total population compared with 25 percent in comparable countries (Makombe, et al. 2010).

Although Tanzania places great emphasis on achieving an equal enrolment ratio of 1:1 for boys and girls, and that all community secondary schools are required to admit equal numbers of girls and boys (Basic Education Statistics Tanzania, 2009), the enrolment situation in secondary schools is still not favourable to girls because of the poor performance of girls in the Primary School Leaving Examination, as shown by the following table.

Table 1.3: Performance by Sex at Primary School Leaving Education, 2005 – 2009

YEAR	Candidates Sat			Candidates Passed			Percentage of Candidates Passed		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2005	253,361	240,585	493,946	173,645	131,291	304,936	68.54	54.57	61.76
2006	337,271	326,992	664,263	257,334	210,945	468,279	76.30	64.51	70.50
2007	396,944	376,609	773,553	248,215	170,921	419,136	62.53	45.38	54.18
2008	514,106	503,759	1,017,865	307,196	229,476	536,672	59.75	45.55	52.72
2009	496,446	502,624	999,070	276,083	217,250	493,333	55.65	43.25	49.41

Source: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2010), *Secondary Education Development Programme II* (July 2010 – June 2015) at <http://moe.go.tz/PDF/SEDP%2011-%FINAL%20DRAFT%20-%2023%20JUNE%202010.pdf> (Last checked 20/10/2010)

The above table shows us that the passed percentage of girls rose by 9.94 from 2005 to 2006 but declined by 19.13 from 2006 to 2007, and has been declining ever since. In 2009, for instance 502,624 502 girls sat the Primary School Leaving Education compared to 496,446 boys. However, only 43.25 percent of girls passed the Primary School Leaving Education compared to 54.57 percent who passed back in 2005.

Further, the performance at the Certificate for Secondary Education Examinations between girls and boys is no different to what we have witnessed at primary school

level. Boys still outnumber girls in enrolment and out-perform girls, as observed in the following table.

Table 1.4: Performance of Girls and Boys at Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations

Year	Candidates Sat			Candidates Passed (Divison I – III)			% of Candidates Passed		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2005	47,639	37,653	85,292	18,860	9,703	28,563	39.59	25.77	33.49
2006	49,684	36,181	85,865	20,110	10,515	30,625	40.48	29.06	35.67
2007	69,457	55,831	125,288	27,735	15,648	43,383	39.93	28.03	34.63
2008	90,918	71,937	162,855	26,896	13,539	40,435	29.58	18.82	24.83

Source: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2010), *Secondary Education Development Programme II* (July 2010 – June 2015) available online at <http://moe.go.tz/PDF/SEDP%2011-%20FINAL%20DRAFT%20-%202023%20JUNE%202010.pdf> (Last checked 20/10/2010)

The above tables reveal that girls are still lagging behind in terms of enrolment and performance. As a result of their poor performance at primary level, they do miss the opportunity to join secondary schools. When the Ministry of Education comments on secondary school enrolment that ‘there is an increase in total enrolment (Form 1-6) from 524,325 in 2005 to 1,466,402 students in 2009’(MoEVT, 2009: 55), it does not consider gender disparity. Moreover, the URT (2011) shows that girls are still lagging behind the enrolment scene (See Table 1.5 below).

Table 1.5 Summary of Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios for Secondary Education, 2007 – 2011

GRADE	INDICATOR	2009 [percentage]			2010 [percentage]			2011 [percentage]		
		Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
Form 1-4	NER	29.7	28.5		31.8	29.9		35.4	33.7	
	GER	47.8	39.3		52.0	42.6		54.5	45.9	
Form 5-6	NER	1.4	1.5		2.1	1.8		2.46	1.6	
	GER	5.2	3.6		5.7	3.8		6.53	3.5	
Form 1-6	NER	30.6	25.1		32.2	27.5		34.5	29.6	
	GER	35.3	27.4		37.5	30.4		39.5	32.5	

Source: URT (2011) Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (BEST) 2007-2011, Dar es Salaam, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Both GER and NER have been increasing from 2009 to 2011. This means that, over the three years (2009-2011) the rate of enrolling students has improved. However, both NER and GER for male students are higher compared to those of females as Table 1.5 has revealed.

Another achievement registered by UNESCO's (2010: 56), apart from the achieved gender parity in primary school, is that Tanzania 'has reduced out-of-school numbers by over 3 million between 1999 and 2007'. Further, the UN Summit's (2010) report points out Tanzania's Land Act and Village Land Act of 1999 secured women's rights to acquire titles and registration of land. However, it is the UNESCO's (2009) report which affirms secondary education level still lags behind in both gender parity and equality and then takes the gender issue a stage further, it urges the government to seriously combat inequality in a number of areas, but especially in empowering girls and women. The report also identifies another problem, apart from unequal enrolment rates, in many countries:

Once girls are in school, their progress is often hampered by teacher attitudes and gender-biased textbooks that reinforce negative gender stereotypes. These school-based factors interact with wider social and economic factors that influence school performance along gender lines (UNESCO, 2009: 2).

Of interest to this study is the current situation in secondary schools regarding the interaction in literature classes. The gender portrayals in the literary texts used in these classes are likely to reflect dominant stereotypical representations of women's and men's roles in society. Therefore, promoting gender equality and social justice, including having women taking an active role in all aspects of life, requires that gender stereotypes in the selected texts are exposed to make the work of mobilising against such stereotypes achievable.

This study draws strength from UNESCO's (2003) stance that full gender equality goes further than mere gross enrolment rates, as it is a much more complex phenomenon than that. This shows us how important such a complex matter is and highlights the importance of classroom interaction as an agent in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The gender equality goal has long been recognised as paramount for the wellbeing of societies; and it is enshrined in the Millennium Development Goal Three, where education is seen as a key target for this. The Tanzanian government, through its education system, has capitalised on gender as one of the important cross-cutting issues to be given a priority in the education policies' implementation. However, although much as the education policy contains progressive elements for gender equality, there are still glaring elements of gender insensitivity and lack of practicality in classroom context, for example in literature teaching. Now that we are more than halfway to the 2015 deadline, it is surely appropriate to wonder if the educational policy implementers such as teachers and students are aware of the gender goal and being empowered to implement it in classroom context. It is thus necessary, and perhaps timely, for a PhD study to contribute to this discussion. Such concerns prompt the following goals and questions for this study.

Research questions

Specifically, this study addresses the following questions:

1 How is gender represented in literature in the English texts currently used in Tanzanian secondary schools?

To answer this question, textual analysis has been carried out to analyse the currently-in-use literary texts as identified by teachers during interview sessions and classroom observation.

2 How is gender addressed in the process of teaching and learning literature in the Tanzanian secondary school classroom context?

To answer this question, observations took place in selected classrooms in Tanzania.

3 What are the views and perceptions of curriculum planners and policy makers, teachers, and students about such gender representations?

Interviews were conducted as far as this question is concerned.

These seemingly simple questions are fundamentally complex, since the gender concerns in Tanzania are directly linked to the policies adopted by the government. An exemplary general policy is the 1992 Women In Development (WID) policy, which emphasises the need to develop ways and means of eradicating discrimination against women, while enabling them to become active partners in the development process. Now the Millennium Development Goal Three focuses on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in education, as pointed out earlier. The policies raise concerns about the stumbling blocks which hinder girls and women from attaining their right to education, right to a gender sensitive curriculum, and to gender sensitive teaching methodology. Hence, this study addresses the issue of gender and classroom interaction in Chapter Two.

Contribution of this study

The study is justified on the grounds of wanting to raise awareness of, and contribute to, the general discussion regarding gender equality, and about meeting the Millennium Development Goal Three: that is, to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The main contribution of this study, therefore, is essentially to consider the issues that relate to literature classroom interaction in

Tanzanian secondary schools, neither of which has been dealt with in depth before. This study is such an attempt.

If the recommendations of this study (See Chapter Seven) are read by those interested parties concerned, and if they consider these recommendations seriously, I hope they can contribute, in however small a way, to empowering literature teachers to be able to conduct critical classroom interactions regarding gender representations in the literary texts. This will be one of the gateways to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal Three. Such an outcome is the purpose of this study.

This study has theoretical and methodological significance in Tanzania. It has an applied nature in that it sets out to disclose insights into gender portrayals, and to make explicit what is usually implicit both in the texts and in classroom context. The findings, therefore, may be used to develop programmes to address gender issues in Tanzania. Potential users of the findings are such as educational institutions and other relevant forums for gender sensitization in the society, gender-equity trainers, literature teachers, gender and human rights activists, teacher educators, and curriculum planners and policy makers. In this way, curriculum evaluation relating to gender issues can be established and a better choice of literary texts provided; effective teaching methods can also be introduced through teacher training.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One outlines the general introduction and sets the scene for this thesis. Chapter Two reviews the literature and related theories whilst Chapter Three outlines the research design and methods. Chapter Four, analyses the literary texts critically. These are the texts used by teachers and students in schools. Chapters Five and Six present the research findings. In Chapter Five, policy makers' and teachers' views are analysed, whilst the findings on the practice of teaching literature as observed in classroom contexts and students' views are presented in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven, a summary of the main findings and the key emerging themes in this study is given and a conclusions drawn.

Summary

Chapter One introduced the study, and provided a background to the topic, followed by an overview of Tanzania. It was thought that in order to understand the true picture of the contemporary education system, a historical overview of education in Tanzania, pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence, was vital. Following the education system overview, the chapter explored the important concept of ‘globalisation’, particularly with regard to Tanzanian economic policies such as the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), and educational policies such as the medium of instruction in secondary schools. The chapter then went on to deal with the Millennium Development Goals, focusing primarily on Goal 3: that of gender, which is connected to the research questions that followed. The chapter ended by describing the contribution of this study and the structure of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This study examines critically the constructions of gender within the African literature texts in Tanzanian secondary schools and the way these texts are mediated by teachers and how they are received and interpreted by students.

In order to understand the way in which literary texts are used to construct gendered cultures in the classroom, this chapter includes a review of literary theories concerning the ways in which texts are read and understood. These include sociological and postcolonial approaches to the study of literature, with a particular emphasis on that which is relevant to the African context. It is argued that African writers have often used literature to construct an African identity, which is based on traditional constructions of gender. However, it is necessary to critique these constructions from a feminist perspective and, as active agents, students in secondary schools may embrace or reject these gender discourses.

Clearly, gendered discourses are not simply constructed through the curriculum, including the texts which are used, but also through the gendered interactions which take place in the classroom. This chapter therefore also provides a review of European and African feminist theories and their application to the study of the formation of gender identities through classroom interaction and literary analysis in the Tanzanian and wider African context. I first provide an overview of the literary theories before discussing the feminist theories and theoretical framework of this study.

Sociology of literature

This thesis is closely informed by the sociology of literature, which stipulates that literature is essentially social, depicting socio-cultural assumptions with regard to the relative positions and values of men and women. Literature is viewed as a mirror that reflects socio-cultural realities prevailing in society (Ogunsina 2006, Hyman 1989),

(see also Di Yanni 2000, Goldman 1980 and Gaus 1979). Such theories contend that literature has a didactic function to perform (Achebe, 1975). Within this framework, all literatures are aimed at teaching people, as Achebe (1975) insists that the purpose of African literature has to point a moral lesson. Similarly, Ogunsinu contends:

The sociology of literature postulates that literary works do not exist in isolation from the society that produces them; neither the artist and his language, nor his ideas are independent of his society... (p. 83).

This is to say that novels, plays or poems depict social reality as experienced by individual writers. Socialization agents such as parents, peers, schools and religious institutions are represented and the language used is that of a particular society.

The most basic implication of the sociological approach to literary criticism is that literary works cannot be divorced from the background of the writers who produced them. Similarly, it is important to understand the context from which the writers draw the raw materials to make their work. It is also important to understand the socio-political background of the text's intended audience. Thus, there is a direct relationship between the writer, the work and the society. Sociological critics are interested in the content or themes found in the literary work. Thus, Mwaifuge (2009) defends his decision to deploy only the sociological approach as he argues that it is the appropriate method for studying Tanzanian narratives in English. He maintains:

Such an approach [sociological] is relevant to the study of Tanzanian prose narratives in English. Indeed, Tanzanian writers are involved in what Achebe (1975:72) calls "the task of re-education and regeneration". The sociological approach allows critics or literary scholars to examine how writers extrapolate the colonial and post-colonial political structure and how the economic, political and cultural environment affects works of art (p. 18).

Said (2000) is aware of the relationship between literature and society. He states that, 'a literary text is commonly supposed to gain *some* of its identity from its historical moment interacting with the attentions, judgements, scholarship and performances of its readers' (p.38) (my emphasis). Whilst accepting a sociological approach, he disagrees with the point that literature mirrors and expresses the whole of life exhaustively.

A major focus of this study is to understand how Tanzanian teachers and students make sense of the African texts they study, many of which reflect the gender relations of an earlier era.

Other literary theories such as formalism⁸, maintain that literature should not be seen as constructing the social world, but as an aesthetic product existing independently of its social location. Such approaches question the validity of interrogating texts in relation to their gendered discourses. This asocial view of literary texts is not a view reflected in this thesis.

Postcolonial approaches to the analysis of literature

African sensibility and national identity

The postcolonial context is clearly part of the backcloth in terms of understanding the gendered discourses within Tanzanian school texts. Since Tanzania attained independence in 1961, writers and cultural critics in the country, as in the rest of Africa, have tried to make sense of the colonial experience, defining their work as postcolonial (Lazarus, 2004).

The term ‘postcolonial’ as Gikandi (2003: 125) admits, ‘had held so much sway in the period immediately following colonialism’, where *each* colonized nation produced its own works that dealt with the history of colonialism, and its legacy, as its central focus. Each nation tried to re-define its own national and cultural identity since it was argued that the concept of ‘culture’, which is an identity of a given nation, is inseparable from the whole process of colonisation. In the case of Africa, the colonial discourse theorist Edward Said (1978), in his work *Orientalism*, discusses ways in which the Europeans undermined African culture, defining European culture as ‘normal’ and African culture as ‘other’. Major African writers

⁸ Formalism embodies the utilitarian view and the Victorian doctrine of *art for art's sake*, as expresses the philosophy that the intrinsic value of art in particular should not serve a didactic or moral purpose (Prettejohn, 2007; Comfort, 2008). Formalism believes that works of literature should not attempt to critique society but should encapsulate aesthetic features which enable them to study apart from particular social and cultural manners. Such theories are interested in the text itself (Wellek and Warren, 1949) or intertextuality ((Murray, 1999: 773). As noted before, what this means is that the work of art is self-sufficient; any historical or social background referential is irrelevant (Rivkin and Ryan, 1998).

such as Chinua Achebe (Nigerian), Ngugi wa Thiongo (Kenyan), Wole Soyinka (Nigerian), Ebrahim Hussein (Tanzanian) and Leopold Senghor (Senegalese) have focused on the impact of colonialism on African culture, including attempts of Europeans to influence gender relations in colonised societies.

It has been argued that colonialists affected many aspects of African societies, such as language, education and religion (Kanneh, 1998). As a result of colonialism, people's national identity, cultural history and identity were distorted and sometimes eradicated through, for instance, the imposition of rule and assimilation in the name of civilization. The aftermath of colonisation left behind such distortions that post-colonial writers have responded with urgency and commitment to address the relevant issues and 'to re-equip themselves culturally' (Kanneh 1998: 92) in order to restore African values, culture and identity. African literature has now been associated with the quest for African common identity (Gikandi, 2009). A major question here is how traditional African gender discourses may articulate with western ideas of gender relations. Some, for instance, question whether ideas of gender equality within the Millennium Development Goals are consistent with 'authentic' African culture.

The postcolonial writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), claimed that colonialism is a major feature of African literature and that discourses which supported colonisation and the myths of power, and of race classification and subordination, cannot simply be ignored. What Ngugi wa Thiong'o is suggesting here is that it is not possible for an African writer to write without referring at some point to colonialism. One of the main points of the study was to consider the extent to which key texts might be described as postcolonial, how this affected their position in relation to gender, and how this was mediated by teachers in the classroom.

Criticisms and defences of the postcolonial literature

Didactical function

The postcolonial literature has been criticised for being overtly moral and didactic, as pointed out earlier, and for adopting an overly sociological approach, in some cases attempting to educate the audience and for focusing on the colonial realities. African

writers have also incorporated oral traditions like songs in their work and have incorporated aspects of African language. Due to this, critics have highlighted that some universities in the west, especially in the US, have for many years taught African literary works in Anthropology, or in ethnic courses, rather than treating them as literature in their own right (Gates 1984). Others have referred to African literature as 'national allegories in the form of mimicry' (Nfa-Abbenyi, 2005: 261), despite the fact that African literature goes beyond such limited definitions.

Writers such as Achebe (1975) refuted the western criticism of African literature as being overly didactic. He insisted that African literature had and should always have a didactic function. For instance, Achebe (ibid) assumes himself the role of being a 'teacher' through his writings. He gives an example of a Nigerian pupil who wrote an essay in the English class about winter. When the pupil's teacher (who happened to be Achebe's wife) asked why he had written 'winter' instead of 'harmattan' - a season which exists in the pupil's own context - the pupil replied that other pupils would ridicule him by calling him a 'bushman'. Therefore, given that mindset, Achebe feels obliged to assume the role of a teacher to educate pupils that African weather should be a comfortable topic to discuss.

Other responses to western criticism of African literature have been made by Nigerian critics such as Irele (1990), and Chinweizu et al. (1980). Generally, they argue against the notion of 'art for art's sake' and contend that African literature cannot be judged merely by western aesthetics. Rather, the African audience and context should be taken into consideration.

Language of postcolonial texts

Central to the issue of African sensibility and black identity advocated in the postcolonial approach (Davies, 1986, 1994) in African literature is the choice of language, through which a sense of nationhood is defined. The question of language is at the heart of any debate about nationhood and cultural community (Bolland 1996). Indeed, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, adopting a pro-postcolonial approach, rejected English as a medium for his work in 1978. *Matigari*, his first such novel, was written in Kikuyu in 1983 and was first published in an English translation in 1989. Ngugi wa Thiongo even went as far as to call for the abolition of the English department at

the University of Nairobi, Kenya and he also argued for the replacement of African literature and languages (Wa Thiong'o et al., 1978, see also see Wright, 1973).). For him, English was also a problem in African literature as the language reflected the attitudes of the colonialists.

By contrast, Achebe expresses his right to draw on his native language, Ibo, as well as on English. In Tanzania, Penina Mlama and other writers such as Shaaban Robert, Ebrahim Hussein, Euphrase Kezilahabi, Elvis Musiba, Ben Mtobwa, Hamie Rajab and Andoro Anduru advocate the use of Kiswahili as the best way to express their views and culture. Language, therefore, involves one's culture. Preceding Wa Thiong'o was a Nigerian critic, Wali (1963) who started the debate on the issue of identity in postcolonial literature through his essay "The Dead End of African Literature". Wali (ibid) maintained that African literature should be written in an African language for the sake of expression and convenience. Obviously, Wali drew some supporters like Ngugi wa Thiong'o - as well as opponents such as Achebe and Mphahlele. In this study, I focus on the teaching of English literary texts used in secondary schools in Tanzania written by African writers post-independence, which are informed by postcolonial understandings.

Diversity and commonalities in postcolonial literature

While it is logical to consider the postcolonial approach which has an Afrocentric view in critiquing African literature, it is worth noting here that Africa itself is not homogenous, and there is no general agreement on what counts as African literature, or on who is or is not an African writer, as pointed out earlier in this chapter. We include in the vast heterogeneous population of the African continent Arab countries like Egypt, and the whole of North Africa, whose culture is identified as Islamic; the Maghreb region that includes Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, and whose authors mainly write in Arabic and have their works translated into English, of whom the prominent Egyptian writers Naguib Mahfouz and Nawal El Saadawi are good examples. There is also the literature of sub-Saharan Africa, written in English, French, Portuguese, and Afrikaans, and in the native or national language of a country - for instance, Kiswahili, in Tanzania where novelists, playwrights and poets as mentioned earlier, have mainly written their texts in Kiswahili.

Nevertheless, it is still difficult to compare these literature texts, due to their different historical backgrounds. For instance, when compared to other pieces of African literature in some European languages, the writing of English in East Africa is described as new (Gikandi 2007) because it came later. However, it would not be appropriate to compare say, Tanzania and Nigeria, because African countries have major differences in their histories. Gikandi (p. vii) outlines some historical explanations to illustrate why East Africa appears to lag behind others in the writing of English. First, East Africa is the smallest region, both in terms of size and population, and hence tends to be overshadowed by larger regions such as West and Southern Africa (who have prominent literary figures such as Achebe, Soyinka, Laye, Sèmbene, Armah and Gordimer). Second, all other regions in the continent have been in contact with Europe earlier than East Africa. Moreover, Roscoe (2008) explains the growth of written literature in English since 1945 in Central Africa, and particularly in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia. Therefore, East Africans, and especially Tanzanians, have a long history of writing and publishing in their own languages.

Regarding the early contact with Europeans, one point can be drawn regarding the influence of colonialists, especially of the British, who, in the 1920s, undertook literacy campaigns in Nigeria. During this time, British colonial rule established publishing companies and promoted the culture of reading (Gikandi, 2009). Because this study touches on aspects of African literature and culture, it is thus important to consider the dynamic of the term ‘African literature’ and to highlight the regional nature of East African literature and, as Gikandi (ibid) puts it, to ‘appreciate its strong sense of regionality’. Meanwhile, West, North and Southern African literature remain central to the development of African written literature.

However, despite these differences, there are many commonalities in African literature as a result of sharing similar origins and culture. As noted by Asante & Asante (1985), ‘a Yoruba who is different from an Ibo or Ashanti still share more in common culture with them than with Thais or Norwegians’ (p.4). This commonality partly derives from a shared experience of struggles against colonialism. This fact is shown in the Tanzanian English curriculum whereby, for a number of years, the

prominent literary texts included have been from different parts of the continent, and especially from West Africa. In reading texts by, say, Achebe or Soyinka, one can see similar experiences to that of Tanzania – the Africanness, the African sensibility to its experiences and culture, as Innes (2007) observes:

Despite their focus on specific local communities like Igbo, Gikuyu and Yoruba, their works succeeded in speaking to and for the concept of national identity and quickly became established as canonical works, not only in the national education curriculum, but also in the Commonwealth... Their works are often read as a metonym for the peoples of the African continent as a whole (preface).

A major criticism of postcolonial literature and criticism from both western and African feminists, on the development of feminist thinking and its application to literature are reviewed in the following sections.

Western feminist perspectives

Feminism 'is not one unitary concept, but instead a diverse and multifaceted grouping of ideas and actions' (Freedman, 2001: 1). It is a huge field with different thoughts, some of which may overlap or differ. Varieties of feminism abound: radical, liberal, Marxist or socialist, amazon, cultural, multicultural, lesbian, women of colour feminism, moderate, material, separatist and pop-feminism (<http://www.cs.uu.nl/wais/html/nadir/feminism/terms.html> (last checked November 2007). Beasley (1999: ix) states:

Feminism is a troublesome term...is one of those terms that inconveniently defy simple explanation...feminism's complexity and diversity provide obstacles to those wishing to gain a satisfactory grasp of its meanings.

However, three categories, namely socialist, liberal and radical feminism, which have immediate relevance to educational issues, are often identified. According to Acker (1990), socialist feminists believe that women's oppression is rooted within the capitalist system where they provide free labour and they are consumers. Liberal feminists champion equal rights and opportunities for women and men and they believe in the elimination of hindrances to women's development in education, economy and individual rights. Acker (Ibid: 92) describes liberal feminists as:

Equal rights feminists, who try to remove barriers that prevent girls reaching their full potential, whether in the mind, the family, school or work place. They concentrate on providing information, changing attitudes and using antidiscrimination legislation.

Whilst radical feminists see patriarchal social systems as the fundamental cause of women's oppression and they fight for the elimination of male dominance particularly in the cultural sphere, and 'placing women and girls' experiences at the centre of any exploration and analysis' (Skelton, 2001:167).

Moreover, liberal feminism aims at:

To empower women to take up their rightful place in this open society through development of female autonomy and to de-gender as far as possible, the public sphere through the legal recognition of women's right to equality on a par with that of men (Arnot and Dillabough, 2006:167).

They further consider 'men as fellow victims of sex role conditioning' (Measor et.al, 1992: 21). However, as it is shown in the theoretical framework in the next sections of this chapter, a combination of different approaches suit this study.

Despite its varieties, the feminist thinking is based on the core themes of womanhood and emancipatory intentions (Assiter, 1996), and a common argument about the inequality of women's position in societies (Harding, 1987). Drawing on the works of writers such as Tannen (1990) and other recent prominent writers of language and gender (see also McElhinny and Mills, 2007; Litosseliti, 2006), most feminists concur with the idea that gender inequality is determined by socio-cultural and economic factors rather than biological factors, factors that are not acceptable when perceived as part of the natural order. Luke (1992:25) draws a slight difference among feminists:

Many feminist philosophers, literary, social, cultural and political theorists have tended towards ... deconstruction of "master" narratives. Feminist educational theorists, by contrast, have tended largely to focus on critiques of patriarchal assumptions and practices in efforts to document the politics and institutionalisation of gendered difference in educational settings and discourses

Moreover, despite the fact that feminism is an interdisciplinary ideology which has developed from different fields such as history, geography, literature, philosophy and

cultural studies (Caine, 1997), feminism has a natural connection to gender studies as it deals with the concepts of sex and gender in the first place (Measor and Sikes, 1992), the concepts which have preoccupied the feminist discourse (Riddell and Tett, 2006). Measor and Sikes define *sex* as physical difference between men and women, pointing out factors such as chromosomes and hormones, whilst *gender* refers to socio-cultural characteristics between a man and a woman. What is evident from this definition is that sex is a natural fact whilst gender is a socially nurtured phenomenon (see also Oakley 1972 on gender and socialisation). People who only stick to the concept of sex do not agree that there is gender inequality since to them women and men have natural roles respectively. Feminist writers such as Spender (1980), disagree with the idea of 'natural' gender roles and argues that there is nothing natural but rather these are 'man-made', especially in the language area, and are designed to protect the status quo.

Regarding the genesis of feminist thinking, first wave feminism in the west took place in the early twentieth century, and concentrated on political suffrage⁹ (Baker 2008, Mills, 2002; Baxter, 2003). The main focus at this point was the struggle of white women in the US and Western Europe for the right to vote. This struggle was extended to many countries as women across the globe, fought for the right to vote.

Second wave feminism in the 1970s and 1980s developed a cultural focus, criticising patriarchal language in school subjects and sexist language and its use to construct and maintain unequal power relations (Mahony, 1985). Discussion of grammar, for instance, in the use of the generic pronoun 'he' as a gender-free word embracing male and female, and worked to change the language that reflected gender inequalities: for example, chairperson instead of chairman, humankind instead of mankind (Mills, 2002). In literature, female characters were claimed to assume subservient roles such as housewives and hence the feminists' role was to challenge this. One of the prominent writers in this phase is Spender (1980), who in her book

⁹ In Britain, prior to the emergence of suffrage movements in the 1840s onwards, women had started writing about gender inequalities. One notable figure here is Mary Wollstonecraft [the mother of the writer Mary Shelley] who published her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 (Freedman, 2001), where she demanded women's right (Caine, 1997))

Man Made Language analysed the construction of male dominance and female subordination through language. Cameron (2003) maintains that much of the research in this era had concentrated on aspects such as ‘women’s language’ and ‘gender difference’. Talbot (2005: 468-9), offers a number of English words that illustrate particularly negative stereotypes of women, such as: chatterboxes, endless gossips, scold, nag, fishwife and parrot (see also Kramarae 1981). While Talbot reminds us that some of these words could be out of use, we should also bear in mind that they could possibly be out of context in the African setting. This study was also interested to find out if there were similar words discussed in Tanzanian literary texts (see chapter four – textual analysis) and in classrooms (see chapter six).

The 1990s saw the emergence of the Third Wave feminism, also known as ‘post-modern feminism’. Wills (2006: 515) describes this wave as the last wave of modernization with electronic common culture through global electronic forms of communication. According to Mills (2002) we are now into the third wave, which goes beyond the first two waves.

She suggests that the approach used by second wave feminists is outdated, since it suggests that all women are subordinate and powerless, whilst all men are dominant and powerful. Mills’ argument implies that powerlessness is no longer an issue for many middle class women, although it is difficult to find evidence for that either in the west or in Africa, where women are particularly likely to experience poverty.

Moreover, writers like Judith Butler (1990) have suggested that rather than focusing on a male and female dichotomy, with men as the oppressors and women as the oppressed we should be focusing on gender as performance, in which individuals choose to negotiate a particular gender identity over time. Riddell and Tett (2006), concur with Butler’s concept of gender as performance arguing that an individual has got freedom to choose the kind of gender perspectives they would like to adopt at a given socio-cultural and economic environment. This is a degree of freedom which is not enjoyed by many African women who continue to be oppressed by poverty and the restrictions imposed by traditional cultures. In this way, the arguments of second wave feminism are still relevant as far as this study is concerned.

Western feminist literary criticism

Feminist literary criticism is as old as feminism itself. It is argued that as literature 'can offer special insight into human experience and sharpen our perception of social reality' (Morris 1993: 7), it can also 'provide a more powerful understanding of the ways in which society works to the disadvantage of women' (Morris, *ibid*). For instance, 'positive images of female experience and qualities can be used to raise women's self-esteem and lend authority to their political demands' and vice-versa (Morris, *ibid*), therefore it is ruled pertinent for feminists to question the representation of female characters in literature. For instance, Millet (1970) in her work *Sexual Politics* argued that females were presented as sexual objects and assigned to subservient roles.

Showalter (1977) went even further by protesting and challenging the canon and the literary establishment which she claimed was dominated by male writers and male critics whose focus was on men writers. A few recognized female writers, mentioned Showalter (*ibid*: 7), were such as Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, George Eliot and Charlotte Bronte. Moreover, Showalter criticised John Stuart Mill (1869) who claimed that women do not have their literary tradition and if they had it could be influenced by men's by arguing that, women do have a genuine literary tradition of their own. She revealed a number of less known female writers of their time, such as Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Florence Nightingale, Mary Carpenter, Angela Burdett, Edith Wharton and Doris Lessing [just to mention but a few]. These concerns of representation of female characters in literature and ignoring the female writers in literary tradition have also been echoed in African feminist thinking as we will see in the next few sections in this chapter.

Other feminists (Lakoff 1975, Halliday 1978, Cameron 1990) have been pre-occupied by the issue of language and representation; arguing that the society is reflected in the language with the values and assumptions held by society being mirrored in the spoken and written language. In general, the study of gender and language has always been concerned with questions of representation as opposed to

reality (Johnson and Ensslin 2007), and it is these issues I have examined in this study.

African feminist thinking

African feminist perspectives have sometimes combined the insights of second and third wave feminism. For example, the Kenyan researcher Ntarangwi (2003) depicts gender as a socio-cultural phenomenon that is constructed and performed in different ways, including through music. Ntarangwi argues that people make efforts to position themselves within their expected gender roles. He argues that, 'for gender to be constructed it has to be done or performed' (p.32) and therefore performance is what determines and maintains gender identity. Ntarangwi is aware that nowadays the 'ideal' gender identities are challenged by the 'practised' one as Swahili society begins to change, just like other societies in the world. For example, the ideal primary role of women as child-carers and home makers is now contested as women now have more opportunity to make an economic contribution to the family. This study explores whether there is such performance of gender in classroom interaction, apart from music examined by Ntarangwi (2003).

African feminist critique of western feminism

Generally, feminist academics¹⁰ in Africa reject the 'assumptions in investigating gender that do not fit the African reality' (Steady, 2005: 317). There is a tendency to generalise people, classes, races and genders as if they were homogeneous.

For example, the African-American feminists argued that they were destined to face additional inequalities. To them the enemy is not just gender discrimination, as the white feminists claimed, but is also one of race and class (Collins, 1991). It has been postulated that early feminism involved white middle class women in the US and Europe who made global assumptions regarding women's subordination based on their own experiences which could not be representative of all the issues that women everywhere faced throughout the world, particularly because of their different

¹⁰ 'The Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) was among the earliest of women's organizations of the South to adopt a critical approach to research and to challenge Eurocentric paradigms from a feminist and postcolonial perspective' (Steady 2005: 317).

historical backgrounds and needs (see Dangarembga 1989: Introduction; Ware 1992; Donaldson 1992).

Recently, Bennhold (2011) reported about the disapproval of some African women's organisations on the appointment of Ms Michelle Bachelet¹¹ to head the UN Women section, claiming that although she is a feminist fighting for gender equality, she is not mentioning the African and Asian women, who are the largest population of world women, to tackle burning issues such as female genital mutilation, HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality. Rather, she focuses on Europe and America. For African feminists, although feminism 'addresses the broad question of how and why women came to be subordinated' (Jackson et al. 1993), the feminist mission of mobilising 'global sisterhood has failed to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the condition of being women' (Brah, 1993).

Although a number of African academic women and activists agree on a concept of 'feminism' that has to do with the struggle for a just and equal socio-economic and political society, they question the relevance of the Euro – American feminism or western feminism and caution against the risk of interpreting African gender identities through western eyes (Cornwall, 2005). For instance, they challenge western radical feminism for devaluing motherhood and maternal politics in Africa while capitalizing on sexuality (Nnaemeka 1994, Amadiume 1987& 1997, Ngcobo 1988 and Nwapa 1998).

One of the most forceful challengers in this debate is Nnaemeka (1994), a Nigerian female writer and critic. She argues for the existence of some traditional African practices such as polygamy and arranged marriage, in opposition to those in the west who condemn such practices as being oppressive to women. She cites advantages of both practices in the African context and reminds her readers that even in the West such practices do exist though they are expressed under different names such as

¹¹ Michelle Bachelet was Chile's defense minister in 2002 and the first Chile's female president in 2006. Ms Fatoumata Sire Diakite, the Malian ambassador to Germany aired her views when was interviewed by Katrin Bennhold for the *International Herald Tribune*; that an African or Asian woman should have been appointed for the post rather than Ms Bachelet who forgets the African and Asian women.

‘mistresses’ and ‘dating services’, respectively. She stresses that in Africa it is legal to have ‘many wives’ as opposed to ‘many women/mistresses’ in the West.

One may obviously disagree, but her point is that critics should be more objective and less Eurocentric. She identifies some of the advantages that polygamy offers women: ‘sharing child care, emotional and economic support, sisterhood and companionship’ (p.575), roles which could be filled with relatives in an extended family system in Africa – or, at least, one might argue this. However, she does not mention the most important issue in polygamy, namely that of sharing a husband - something which creates enmity and rivalry among women, instead of ‘sisterhood’, as advocated by feminism.

Similarly, Buchi Emecheta, a female Nigerian writer, is well known in African literary criticism for her criticism of women’s subordination through the patriarchal system. Patriarchy is, of course, a key concept within all branches of feminist thought, but it is particularly important within radical feminism. Surprisingly, however, she concurs with Nnaemeka (1994) on the issue of polygamy, maintaining that it can be liberating to women as it provides time for a woman to deal with other things, instead of having to concentrate exclusively on her husband, who can then be looked after by his other wives.

Ogundipe - Leslie (1994) agrees on the notion of feminism and maintains that there has always been an indigenous African feminism. She argues, however, that the concept is very much misunderstood in the African context as people narrowly define it with wrong meanings such as to oppose men as well as African culture, and to imitate or copy foreign issues such as those of western women. As she tries to list what is not feminism, Ogundipe-Leslie uses some strong language (p. 546). Due to what she calls ‘misplacement’ of the term feminism and ‘to avoid charges of imitating Western feminism’ she suggests an alternative word ‘Stiwanism’: STIWA is an acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa (p.550). On the other hand, Flora Nwapa suggests ‘womanism’, a term which was also suggested by the African-American writer, Alice Walker. For them, ‘womanism’ suits an ideology that involves both men and women (Mohanty et al., 1991).

Due to reaction against the narrowly defined feminist ideology and the false stereotype of feminists as anti-male and anti-African culture, these African women intellectuals do not want to be labelled as 'feminist'. Moreover, feminism has a negative connotation in the African environment. In this light, Emecheta (1988) suggested that she be called a feminist with a small 'f'. She maintains:

...For myself, I don't deal with great ideological issues. I write about the little happenings of everyday life. Being a woman, and African born, I see things through an African woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist with a small f (p.553).

Such challenges to gender academics and activists in Africa are also well explained by Tanzanian researchers such as Ngaiza and Koda (1991). When they conducted research on gender in Tanzania, people accused them of distorting other women's lives and that they identified problems which are not Tanzanian, rather they are 'far-fetched and are not supported by typical Africa women' (p. 206). However, stories of the respondents involved in their study speak for themselves as they reveal that the problems of violence against women, for example, female genital mutilation and women being denied access to education, among other problems, featured in many instances within Tanzanian women. They suggest that there is a need for African women researchers to be legally protected in order to practice their freedom to exercise democracy, freedom of speech and participation in research about lives of African women.

African feminist critique on gender and problems of colonisation

For many African feminist critics, the problem of the subordination of women is not only linked to dominance of men as argued by western feminists, but also linked to colonialism. For instance, Amadiume (1987) argues that colonial education through Christian missions excluded girls, as colonialists were only interested in training a few men to serve as warrant chiefs, court clerks and messengers in the local administrative areas. According to Amadiume (ibid), prior to colonialism, women in African societies assumed powerful positions because of the 'flexibility' of gender construction, of which gender was separate from sex, and even the African myth and

oral literature depicted the female role in respectable positions such as the supernatural and goddess¹². One may well question the notion that the powerful women are those supernatural ones who seemingly have extra powers beyond everyday explanation. (See Chapter Four, discussion of the texts).

For Amadiume, it is only from the time of colonialism that women started to assume secondary status in African society – a claim that western feminists are not aware of. Using examples from her native Igbo town, Nnobi in Nigeria, she describes the African gender pattern:

Daughters could become sons and consequently males. Daughters and women in general could be husbands to wives and consequently males in relation to their wives (p.15).

Another major critique along this line draws examples from the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria. This view posits that pre-colonial Africa was less concerned with gender, a category which is central to western feminism, but which is ‘highly contested when applied to Africa’ due to the complexity of African societies. For instance, changes in the lifecycle can alter women’s status (Steady 2005: 318). Rather, the pre-colonial Africa was much more concerned with the factor of age (Oyewumi, 2005), for example, senior ladies were highly respected in society.

Despite these critiques, I would concur with the feminist argument that, despite the many different forms of marginalization, and despite the diversity in feminism, gender is still generally a major social division, with women being the most marginalised, and that feminism should apply a pluralistic approach to tackle the problem (Erens 1990, Muhanty et al., 1991), recognising that women will adopt different methods of struggle in their different social contexts.

¹² The term gender is considered complex in the African context, as also revealed by Steady (2005: 319) that female ancestors have equal status with male ancestors. Ifi Amadiume’s book *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: gender and sex in an African society* remains pivotal in discussions about the concepts of sex and gender from an African perspective.

African feminist critique of male dominance in literature

Despite African women's reservations about western feminism, they still deploy feminist arguments in critiquing the dominance of African men in the literary field. Thus concerns have been raised by African women critics that African literature has been dominated in the past by male authors and, because of this trend, women have either been omitted from history or misrepresented in literature. The majority of male writers have also been criticised for idealizing African women by positing them in terms of their essentiality, beauty, submissiveness and nurturing qualities, and have thus marginalized them in the process (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997). Critiques have focused on western male writers who have depicted Africa, as well as African writers.

Stratton (1994), in her book *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, argues that male domination in African literature could also be defined as a form of colonial literature. She contends that, having dominated African literature for so long, male authors and critics have misrepresented African women as much as most foreigners have misrepresented Africa. She draws an example from Conrad's book, *Heart of Darkness*, which is argued to have misrepresented the African continent as being primitive compared to the west. Stratton concludes by arguing that African literature may be better understood if it is examined through the lens of gender. Nfah – Abbenyi (1997: 6) argues that a gender critique is able to 'offer more dynamic representations of women than the images of subordination often presented by their male counterparts.' Such an argument would be supported by radical feminists who argue for the elimination of male dominance and to put the spotlight on women's issues instead.

In a similar vein, Ama Ata Aidoo (1988), a Ghanaian female writer, has explicitly expressed her concern about how African women writers have not been recognized by other writers and critics, including Africans and non-Africans. She recalls once how a German Professor visited Zimbabwe in 1985 and gave a lecture about African literature. The lecture lasted for at least two hours but failed to mention any African female writer. To her dismay, when the Professor apologized after being told of her concern, he explained that it was 'natural' to forget African women writers, a claim that led Aidoo to protest:

Am I jealous? But of course... Why should it be 'natural' to forget that some African women had been writing and publishing for as long as some African men writers? (p. 514).

She then went on to mention a number of female African writers (just like the way Showalter 1977, revealed the unknown female writers to the western world), although most were from West Africa (except for Micere Mugo who is Kenyan, and the South African, Bessie Head) but omitted to include writers from the other regions of Africa.

In Nigeria, Ogunsina (2006), Oyewumi (2005), and Oyesaki (1989) reveal that a narrow range of characteristics are attributed to women in literature are such as beauty, envy, jealousy, a higher desire for child-bearing, as well as an intense capacity for love. Ogunsina, for example, maintains that although women are known to have played significant socio-political roles in pre-colonial, colonial and current post-colonial society, there remains a masculinity bias in the Yoruba literary works, whereby language and characterisation have often been defined according to a male perspective, while distorting women's contribution to history. Such distortions through literature, one would argue, are passed on from generation to generation. Unless we are aware of this fact we will not be able to reverse the ongoing consequences. The current study's focus is to explore similar issues in the Tanzanian context, and, in particular, to find out how these literary texts impact in shaping students' gender identity.

There are similar examples of the concern that women have been omitted in Tanzanian history of independence (See Tripp: 2000, for the case of Uganda, and Geisler 2004 for the case of Southern Africa), where heroines of the nations are rarely mentioned because of their gender. Research has shown that the public is made to believe that only men under the leadership of the first president, Julius Nyerere, struggled for Tanzania's independence. For instance, Geiger (2005) contends that Tanzania's [formerly Tanganyika's] nationalism can be considered as women's work as they contributed much to its construction by raising money to support Nyerere's trips abroad, mobilizing communities for mass rallies, and offering their houses to be used for the Tanganyika National Union Party (TANU), the then sole party in Tanganyika that was fighting for independence. Moreover, it is women

who hid men's TANU cards - for those who were afraid to carry them under the British rule – and, in general, it is evident that women were even more active than men. However, women like Ms Titi Mohamed, who deserve biographical attention, have never received any because 'the normative gender identity of nationalists' fits men only (p.211). To this end, Geiger concludes that, 'Nyerere became the father of the nation after independence; to the women activists of the 1950s, he was their son' (212). This study is interested in finding out if similar criteria are applied in literary texts and in the reaction of teachers and students.

Gender and classroom interaction

While 'concerns about the ways in which girls (and boys) are portrayed in stereotyped ways in texts are certainly not new' (Jackson et al. 2010: 2), in Europe, there has been a growing interest associated with feminists about classroom interaction as a priority area for research and reform (Acker, 1990) since the 'interaction is affected by gender' (Francis, 2007: 130)). Researchers echo concern of boys' domination in classroom space and teachers attention (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Francis, 2005& 2007; Spender 1982; and Kelly, 1988). Further, boys are reported to be asked and contributed in classroom more than girls and even teachers focused their questions on boys rather than girls (Younger et al.1999). Similarly, Jackson et al. (2010: 13) observe:

Despite girls' seemingly greater ability than boys to manipulate social worlds, they are unable to attain the summit of the classroom pecking-order, which remains reserved for dominating boys.

This picture prompted some researchers to advocate single sex education (Salisbury and Jackson 1996) also prompted an inquiry by feminists, as Acker (Ibid: 96) observes:

Feminists researchers are seeking to gain a more precise understanding of the classroom dynamics of gender, asking what form of interaction takes place under what circumstances and why

Gore (1992: 59) has described the importance of classroom interaction by stating that the classroom itself is a place for empowerment, where teachers can 'turn the macro

vision [of empowerment] into the micro of their daily practices'. Such daily practices, argues Arnot (2002), could reveal what she terms as 'gender codes' in the 'social and culture reproduction' of gender (p.5). However Arnot's (Ibid) focus is on the school texts, mainly on the reproduction of class and gender relations under capitalism as represented by the structure and content of the curriculum not the process of teaching-learning process, the focus to this study.

Moreover, Riddell (1992) who worked on school based initiatives for tackling gender inequality gave an overview of the Scottish experience on gender and education. She argued that there were contradictory results between data obtained quantitatively and qualitatively regarding achievement for girls and boys in school. While quantitative data showed that girls were better than boys in different aspects of the curriculum, in reality girls were still victims of sexism and a gendered curriculum. As a result, boys took physical sciences and technological subjects whilst girls focused on business and arts. To rectify this Riddell (ibid) suggested that gender research should focus on classroom practices in addition to examining patterns revealed by official statistics. Similarly, Erskine (1992: 54) summarised her observation as follows:

If equal opportunities policies are to effect positive change, they will have to operate beyond 'overall organisation' level. They must intrude into the life of the classroom and personal interactions and so influence how people think and act.

Due to these concerns, Atthill et al. (2009) outline a guide to ensure a gender-responsive school focusing on areas such as teaching methods, the language used in classroom and the way teachers treat both boys and girls in classroom.

Research gap

In relation to gender and classroom interaction, unfortunately, little has been reported from schools in Africa particularly in relation to Tanzania. There has been little research on gender interaction in classroom despite its significance in understanding the school and classroom culture. School culture is considered as 'patterns of values, beliefs and traditions that have been formed over the years within a school' (Higgins & Sath, 1997, quoted by Barr 2011: 365). This study is such an attempt.

Theoretical framework and conclusion

This study contributes to the development of understanding of the formation of gendered identities in Tanzanian classrooms, with a particular focus on the role of literature.

In light of the discussion undertaken in this chapter, this study adopts a combination of literary approaches, namely: the feminist and postcolonial theories. Understanding how literature is used in the classroom and the way in which teachers present literature to their pupils is critical in influencing how they construct themselves and their society. Whilst influenced by the gender discourses within the books which are studied in Tanzanian classrooms, the pupils are also actively involved in constructing their own gender and national identities, and therefore choose to accept or reject the dominant messages and discourses.

In light of the discussion undertaken in this chapter, it is my thesis that for a better understanding of the richness and multifaceted nature and function of African literature, the approach adopted in this study is best placed within a combination of feminist and postcolonial theories. In this case, this study attempts to move from the traditional and dominant belief in literary criticism that a work of art is a mirror that should entirely reflect reality, to an argument that writers can construct something deliberately and create realities by using language to suit the messages intended to reach the audience, without necessarily depicting the dominant beliefs and conceptions in society, or suggesting that what is written in a literary work is a prescription of what things should be. In the same vein, Nfah-Abbenyi (2005) maintains that literary works are themselves theoretical texts, and hence, authors here can be described as both markers and makers of concepts and ideologies. African literature in this sense constitutes that reality, which readers, who interact with the texts, are able to agree with or reject.

By applying modern theories such as the postcolonial and feminist approaches, the study moves further from the traditional approach which suggests that literary criticism of African literature can be carried out by simply investigating the society, that is, the relationship between the work and the society. And by applying an

African feminist thinking, this study takes further the notion that women's position is universally subordinate, or that subordination has the same definition across continents, by exploring the way gender representations have been manifested in the literary texts used in Tanzanian schools, and by discussing the other avenues through which women have assumed power or equal representation to men.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literary theories applied to this study, such as the sociological and postcolonial approaches, and went on to explore European and African feminist theories and their application to the study of the formation of gender identities through classroom interaction, and literary analysis in the Tanzanian and wider African context. From this analysis, a conclusion was drawn.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and empirical methods employed in the study. It starts by explaining the textual analysis which was conducted of particular texts used in Tanzanian secondary schools. This analysis was intended to address the research question which sought to explore the way gender is portrayed and constructed in texts used in the study of literature in Tanzanian secondary schools. Subsequently, the fieldwork in Tanzania is described. This consisted of interviews with policy makers, teachers and students, and classroom observations. The aim of this part of the study was to understand the policy guiding the selection of the texts, and the way in which the texts were mediated by teachers to students. Throughout, the focus is on policy makers', teachers' and students' understandings of gender discourses within the literary texts.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the methods adopted in relation to the interviews with policy makers, teachers and students; and classroom observation. I then describe the data analysis strategies adopted and move on to the scope and location of the study. Consideration is given to practical matters, including the negotiation of access. I then discuss issues of reflexivity concerning my position as a researcher and as a teacher educator. Finally, I discuss the range of ethical issues arising in the research.

Selection of the literary texts for analysis

Eight texts used in African literature classes were selected for textual analysis. These include four novels namely: *Passed Like a Shadow* (Mapalala, 2006), *Is It Possible?* (Ole Kulet, 1971), *The Great Ponds* (Amadi, 1969) and *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958). The two plays are *Three Suitors, One Husband* (Mbia, 1960) and *The Lion and the Jewel* (Soyinka, 1963). A collection of two dramatic monologue poems

called *Song of Lawino and Ocol* (p'Bitek, 1966) was analysed as well as one freestanding poem *Development* (Mabala ed., 1980). The literary texts selected for analysis were those used by teachers and students during classroom observations. The following table summarises the texts and authors' details.

Table 3.1: Texts selected for analysis

Text title	First published	Author & nationality	Gender
<i>Things Fall Apart</i>	1958	Chinua Achebe, Nigerian	Male
<i>The Great Ponds</i>	1969	Elechi Amadi, Nigerian	Male
<i>Is It Possible?</i>	1971	Henry Ole Kulet, Kenyan	Male
<i>Three Suitors, One Husband</i>	1960	Oyono Mbia, Cameroonian	Male
<i>The Lion and the Jewel</i>	1963	Wole Soyinka, Nigerian	Male
<i>Song of Lawino and Ocol</i>	1966	Okot p'Bitek, Ugandan	Male
<i>Development</i>	1980	Kundi Faraja, Tanzanian	Male
<i>Passed Like a Shadow</i>	2006	Bernard Mapalala, Tanzanian	Male

In relation to each text, a synopsis was written followed by an analysis of the themes, with a particular focus on the construction and treatment of masculinity and femininity, power relations, education, domestic violence and issues relating to gender representation.

All the texts under discussion are written by men (see the nature of syllabus in chapter four) and most of the texts were originally written and published in English, except for p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino and Ocol*, which was translated from the Acoli version *Wer pa Lawino*. The Acoli language is found in northern Uganda where the author originated. Also, the play *Three Suitors, One Husband* by Oyono Mbia was originally written and published in French in 1960. The books are relevant to the Tanzanian context and, indeed, to many other African countries that are not

represented, as they share many common features. As indicated earlier, the analysis focused on identifying gender representations in the chosen texts, and the factors underpinning the selection of these texts. A detailed analysis of the eight texts is in Chapter Four.

Interviews with policy makers (officials) and teachers

This study is primarily qualitative since interviews were used to collect data. Key participants in this study were the education key actors dealing with literary texts used in secondary schools in Tanzania. Participants who enabled this study to go ahead have been variously referred to as informants, participants or respondents. They are identified as participants in a way to acknowledge their active way they played in constructing understanding through interviews; informants and respondents as they informed the study with quality information and understanding through interviews. These include: students, teachers, curriculum planners and policy makers. Curriculum planners and policy makers are collectively referred to as ‘policy makers’ or ‘officials’. These were selected by virtue of their positions and the relevant information sought. The following table summarises the interview sample.

Sample summary

Table 3.2: Summary of the interview sample

Table 12: Summary of the interview sample									
Regions	Schools	School Type		Form Four Students		Teachers		Curriculum designer	Policy makers
		Rural/Outskirts Of Town	Urban	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Dar es Salaam	A	Girls		2	2	1		1	3
	B		Mixed	2	2		1		
Mwanza	C	Mixed		2	2	1			
	D		Mixed	2	2		1		
Dodoma	E	Mixed Outskirts		2	2	1			
	F		Boys	2	2		1		
Total	6	3	3	12	12	3	3	1	3
TOTAL		6 Schools		24 Students		6 Teachers		4 Officials	
TOTAL INTERVIEWEES				34					

The main question required the participants to give their views about the gender representations in the literary texts used in secondary schools, whilst the minor ones sought to elicit information that related to policy and curriculum issues in the teaching-learning process of literature, particularly where gender issues were concerned.

Interviews with policy makers and teachers were designed to investigate how texts had been selected for the curriculum and what gender discourses they believed were being conveyed. I wanted to know whether policy makers and teachers regarded the teaching of literature as a central means of critiquing traditional gender ideologies in the classroom.

Interviews were conducted in both Kiswahili and English as respondents preferred to use either of the two languages. Each interview took about an hour to complete. They were tape recorded and later transcribed during fieldwork. Some were translated from Kiswahili to English during data collection and some were translated in the course of data analysis when some direct quotations were required. However, it was not easy to transcribe the tapes of all of the participants of this study while having to continue with the data collection. Thus, almost half of the data was transcribed upon my return to Edinburgh.

Generally, the research methodology and data analysis relate to the research questions that were set in chapter one. The following is a summary of the research design in chronological order:

- 1 Interviews with the policy makers (education officials), teachers and students
- 2 Analysis of the literary texts identified by the informants
- 3 Observation of the teaching-learning practice in classroom context
- 4 Follow-up interviews with teachers

I chose to use qualitative interviews because I needed to develop in-depth understanding of participants' views and perceptions on gender issues (see Mason, 2002). Interviews in this study were semi-structured but allowed for an element of probing when it was required. May (2001:1) praises semi-structured interviews on the grounds that they 'allow people [respondents] to answer more on their own terms than standardized interview permits, but still provide a greater structure for comparability over that of the focused interview'.

One of the advantages of interviewing the 'elite' like policy makers, argues Lilleker (2003), is the obtaining of information that would otherwise not be disclosed in policy documents as themselves are a good source of information of their duties and undertakings. However, Lilleker (ibid) warns that 'they may offer insights, but could equally exaggerate or down play their own role' and adds that 'the more

controversial the research the less response you will get and fewer of those who do respond will be willing to speak entirely on the record' (p. 213). A different concern is raised by Dexter (2006) regarding the elites that the appropriate individuals for interview may refuse to be interviewed for several reasons such as their assistants prohibit the researcher from seeing them in the first place, or to avoid 'being embarrassed' in case they do not know the answers to the questions (p.37). Dexter (ibid) suggests that the best way to make them willingly be ready for the interview is to explain to them the relevance or the importance of your project and use the individual's colleagues to convince them.

Interviews with students

Students were interviewed in groups of four. Two girls and two boys were randomly chosen in each of the four co-education schools, whilst four girls and four boys were also randomly chosen from a girls' and boys' school, respectively. This made a total of twenty four students. According to Wilkinson (2004: 178), group interviews 'can involve as few as two, or as many as a dozen or so, participants, the normal is between four and eight'.

The big challenge of group interviewing though is the organisation of the interview in terms of making sure that all participants respond to the questions and participate fully. Cohen et al (2007: 373) describe this challenge as a disadvantage of the method whereby 'one respondent may dominate the interview'. To minimize this shortcoming I hired an assistant to deal with tape recording of the sessions while I concentrated on managing the groups and taking some notes.

Group interviewing proved to be a useful technique for me in student interviews. As other researchers have commented (see for instance, Wilkinson 2004, Kissling 1996 and Frith 2000), it was easy for the students to talk freely about their views in a naturalistic group context that 'typically included a range of communicative processes such as story telling, joking, arguing, boasting, teasing, persuasion, challenge and disagreement' (Wilkinson 2004: 180). As a result we had a wide range of responses in the form of debates, especially when I had girls and boys in a group,

where girls, in some schools for instance, reacted to boys' responses and the vice versa; my role being a moderator to facilitate interaction.

Morgan (2001) points out the concern that group interview may be less natural because of the use of a moderator and the general complexity of managing the group, of which he responds to this concern by maintaining that:

This [claim] matches a belief that group dynamics are more complex than the dynamics in one-on-one interviews, so the skillful management of the interview is more important to the success...The problem with this claim is that it is based on an appeal to common sense rather than actual evidence. In fact, it is just as easy to argue the opposite – that group interviewing is easier (p.151).

Similarly, Fontana and Frey (2000) affirm that the skills required in group interviewing are practically the same to those required for one to one interviewing. For instance, they maintain that all interviewers must be 'flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive and good listeners' (p.652).

Classroom observation

The study also used an ethnographic approach, drawing on classroom observations focusing on the interaction between pupils and teachers. Following is the observation schedule used in the study.

Table 3.3: Observation schedule for teachers and students (Partly adapted from Scrivener's 2005 model)

Mode of teaching applied	Delivering the lesson	Interaction setting	Students' activities	Physical setting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participatory (involves teacher & students; see Malawi Institute of Education: 2005) • enquiry (students as partners in the process with their existing knowledge & experience; Kahn & O'Rourke: 2005) • teacher centred (eg lecture) • student centred (students' needs direct the methods employed) • activity based (eg. discussion, role play) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resources • introducing/developing the text • type of gender questions asked • questions directed to which gender • gender images students and teacher agree and/or disagree with? • discussion on language use • author's biography & point of view about gender relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal • informal • teacher to students • students to teacher • students to students • in pairs • in groups • one student (or the teacher) reads aloud • non-verbal interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading • speaking • writing • listening • role playing & dramatisation • discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe how girls&boys are seated, space, light, air, the board, equipment • describe appearance of girls & boys e.g. their clothes & posture • how do female & male teachers project themselves • the general atmosphere in the classroom

The observation was essential to understanding the mediation of gendered cultures through studying the teaching and learning process, the way teachers mediated the texts to students and the way students responded to them. We are not only concerned with texts as such, but also with the interactive processes of meaning-making, by looking at how teachers and students carry out the discussion.

Although 'observation can often be difficult and complex, but it is also one of the most versatile ways of gathering information' (Simpson and Tuson, 2003: 3); it involves naturally occurring data (Silverman 1993), and so I observed teachers in their literature lesson in order to capture their methodology. I was interested in observing the teaching and learning process in the classroom context to see the level

of awareness that teachers and students have of the way texts can promote gender (in) equality. To use Sunderland's (2006: 151 - 2) words, the 'talk around the texts' was my focus, while the 'gender critical point' was a particular area of concentration. As a non-participant observer, I was interested in identifying what information was being conveyed and how, and what opinions of the texts were being formed and expressed by teachers and students.

Overall, how teachers present texts and how students respond to them is the main focus of the thesis. I assumed that students are not passive recipients, and that they actively interact with the texts in the course of classroom discussions.

In each of the six schools I visited, I was given two periods (equals 80 minutes) to observe.

The content of the observation checklist was based both on my research question and the interviews I carried out with teachers. As explained earlier in this chapter, I conducted the interviews prior to observations because I wanted to have some gender- item focus in my observation, and thus, initially, I had to know the kind of literary texts teachers used in the classroom. Through interviews, teachers told me the texts they used: these included novels, plays and poems (see the analysis of these texts in chapter four). In this way, I was able to familiarise myself with these before each of the observation sessions.

Follow-up interviews with teachers

In addition, after each observation I also carried out follow-up interviews with each teacher after one of their lessons. I invited the teachers for a soft drink at the school canteen, or in the office; in some cases - as in schools A and C - we had lunch together. I used these opportunities to ask the teachers a few questions about their lessons. I would ask them, for instance, how they had gone about planning the lesson and what other sources of information they had used apart from the literary texts. I also asked them to explain specific matters that I observed in class, such as why they did not touch on the issue of gender representation, or why students had not been given adequate opportunity to become involved in the lesson, or in case of School D, for instance, why girls appeared to be more passive in class than the boys. One

teacher in school E was rushing to town as we finished the classroom session so I had to drive with him to where he was going in order to ask him a few questions about his lesson. As this school is located outside Dar es Salaam city centre, I had ample time to talk to him, too.

In some cases I had to arrange for another appointment with teachers for the follow-up interviews as they had other classes to teach and administrative duties. For instance, one teacher is also the deputy head teachers and another one is the academic teacher of the whole school, and thus responsible for things like school supplies and school timetable.

The purpose of a follow-up interview to each teacher was that, since I identified significant texts, topics, episodes, sections in the texts, themes, dialogues and issues of language use from earlier interviews and observations, I certainly needed to return to respondents so that they can clarify some issues in order to link my analysis and their responses.

Other data resources

Curriculum documents in which policies are set to direct or guide the syllabus design were also examined to obtain the general profile of gender as an educational agenda in Tanzania. The main objective was to read educational policy documents that guide the design and development of the English literature curriculum. Related documents such as those outlining the Millennium Development Goals were of interest since they would help identify the extent to which these goals influence the design of the curriculum.

I was particularly interested in examining the extent to which the African literature curriculum reflected the principles of gender equality which are present with the Millennium Development Goals.

While some researchers have expressed difficulties in obtaining policy documents (for instance, Syachaba 2005 for the case of Zambia), this was not a problem in my case as some of these documents can be accessed from the Tanzania government website and some were provided by the officials during fieldwork and I purchased

some materials at the Tanzania Institute of Education for instance the 2005 current English language syllabus, of which literature is a component.

Data analysis

The textual analysis was guided by postcolonial approaches and African feminist thinking, a combination of modern theories in literary criticism in determining the way literature should be taught in the classroom, as well as by the way that literary texts should be analysed.

While the postcolonial approach focuses on the nature and function of today's African literature, the African feminist thinking guided the analysis of the texts in view of two major theses put forward by African women writers and critics: first, the argument that the position of African women cannot be generalised to all women in other continents due to their extreme socio-historical and cultural backgrounds, and this is discussed in relation to western feminism. Second, through the argument of the dominance of the male writers' canon in African literature and the non-literary world, which has misrepresented African women. Because this study deals with gender representations in literature, the textual analysis, therefore, sought not only to discuss the literary theories mentioned above, but also explored 'language and gender' as influenced by feministic thinking, the focus of this study being power dynamics revealed in the use of language in literary accomplishment (See chapter two for postcolonial and feminist approaches, and chapter four for textual analysis).

I familiarised myself with all the texts identified by teachers during interviews before conducting an in-depth reading and analysis of the literary texts shown in Table 3.1. This study did not confine itself to analysing any of the literature genres, despite the fact that I had an idea of which literary texts were used in secondary schools in Tanzania, rather I waited until I visited schools and I picked the texts for analysis from teachers and students in classrooms.

Regarding interviews, they were fully transcribed then were coded followed by analysis which was done from the transcripts. Following the tape transcription, I went through my notes which I kept throughout my fieldwork to categorise the

themes together with the transcripts. The following procedure for inductive analysis of data was followed (adopted from Thomas 2003: 5):

1 Preparation of raw data files and data cleaning: this included initial reading through the text data, format the raw data files in terms of font size, margin, question or interviewer comments highlighted and print or make a backup of each raw data file, for instance each interview.

2 Close reading of the text: this aimed at detailed reading in order to be familiar with the content and gain understanding of the themes in the text.

3 Creation of categories: by identifying and defining categories or themes while applying copy and paste procedure using a word processor.

4 Reducing overlap and redundancy among the categories for some categories coded into more than once, and considering texts which were not be assigned to any category to establish whether or not they were relevant to the research objectives.

5 Continuing revision and refinement of category system: by searching for subtopics, including contradictory points of view and new insights and by selecting appropriate quotes that conveyed the core theme of a category and then linking the category of similar meaning.

Regarding observation, I identified significant texts, topics, episodes, sections, themes, dialogues and issues of gender and language use from the observation schedule and subject them to the same analytical inductive approach. Thomas (2003: 2) defines the approach as used to do the following: condense extensive and varied raw data into a brief summary format; establish a clear link between objectives and summary findings derived from raw data; and develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data. This study seeks those same outcomes. The categorisation of the texts on the basis of themes facilitated the linking of themes categorised from observation and interviews. I finally developed a kind of 'relational model' for coherence of the whole analysis.

Scope and location of the study

Form Four Students

This study focuses on the literature for ordinary level (junior). As it is a formative stage, where secondary school students start reading the literary texts, then analyse them in preparation for national examinations it was thought appropriate for my research to focus there. As Page et al. (2009: 1) put it, this stage ‘caters to an age group that is critical for identity formation and for developing the critical skill of decision-making; the stage that provides a link between childhood and adulthood’. My aim, as stated elsewhere in this study, is to analyse the gender representations in the literary texts used in African literature classes in Tanzania and explore the teaching-learning practice in classrooms. I was interested to see how teachers would introduce the subject matter as far as the literary texts are concerned, and how students are taught to respond to it. It would be beneficial to ‘sacrifice scope for detail’ (Silverman, 2005: 9) by dealing only with form four literature beginners, so as to examine more fully what teachers’ and students’ roles might be in portraying or constructing and defining gender roles and identity in literature. While the form three students are introduced to ‘theories of literature’, it is in form four that learners are expected to have covered a wide range of the literary texts.

Six schools in three different regions

According to the URT (2007), Tanzania had 2806 government secondary schools and 679 private schools, making a total of 3485 in 2007. The number of secondary schools has increased by 2.4 percent from 4266 in 2010 to 4367 secondary schools in 2011, Dar es Salaam Region having the highest number of secondary schools (325 or 7.4 percent) followed by Kilimanjaro Region (320 or 7.3 percent) whilst Rukwa Region has the smallest number (113 or 2.6 percent) (URT, 2011). The study tried to include as many categories as possible to ensure enough representation from the population. As this study deals with literature and gender issues, a purposive sampling method was used to access the relevant informants.

Bearing in mind the nature of this study and to avoid the tendency to generalise about teachers and students in Tanzania, this study took into account other facets of identity including aspects such as rural schools, urban schools, private schools, government, co-education schools or single sex secondary schools. It was also important that only Arts classes, that is, those that study literature (and not Science subjects) should be included, and only schools using the national curriculum were involved in the sample.

The rationale for the selection of the six schools was based on the fact that drawing respondents from a wide range of variables and educational settings constructed a better distribution of educational life opportunities. The six schools were not selected within one region but rather from three different regions in Tanzania.

Tanzania is administratively divided into 26 regions, of which three were included for data collection in this study, namely: Dar es Salaam (the Eastern part of Tanzania bordering the Indian Ocean), Dodoma (the Central part of Tanzania) and Mwanza (the extreme Northern part of Tanzania bordering Lake Victoria).

Dar es Salaam was chosen because it happens to be the ‘melting pot’ of Tanzania. The Ministry of Education and the Institute of Education, which give access to curriculum planners, policy makers and other respondents in schools, are located there. In addition, the University of Dar es Salaam and the Dar es Salaam University College of Education produce a number of secondary school teachers who work in the capital. However, despite its advantages, Dar es Salaam alone could not fairly represent all the other regions in Tanzania as findings would not be easily generalised to the whole country. Therefore, two further regions were included in the study to meet the required data.

Dodoma is a rapidly growing city. The University of Dodoma has recently been established and the headquarters for the Tanzania’s ruling party (CCM) is also in Dodoma, whilst Tanzania’s National Parliament is located in the heart of the city; it was thought that Dodoma could contain some modern bookshops or libraries within it, which could have some impact on the teaching–learning context in schools.

Mwanza is the location of the Butimba Teachers' College that annually produces secondary teachers with diplomas who mostly work in Mwanza and its neighbouring regions. Although Mwanza is distant from both Dodoma and Dar es Salaam, it represents other Lake regions in a different setting. All these different contexts thought to yield interesting findings.

However, these different research settings that provided variation also raised difficulties for instance, it was challenging to make comparisons across schools. Dar es Salaam teachers and students were more informed of the currently in use literary texts than their counter regions of Dodoma and Mwanza where they were still using the new list of texts. Urban schools, for instance, such as Schools B, D and F had different teaching and learning contexts compared to rural school such as Schools A and C. Insufficient materials such as books and the lack of important amenities like libraries and technology in rural schools affected the process of teaching and learning. In government schools in particular, there was a severe shortage of resources so that the teacher spent most time in class reading the book or getting the students to read aloud. Whilst in School E, the most affluent school, there was more discussion due to the smaller class size and availability of the texts. Moreover, observing in crowded classes such as in Schools B and D was more challenging for the observer than observing in a small class like in School E.

Differences in salary scale and other fringe benefits and incentives between teachers in the state and private sectors may also have an impact, while female and male students and teachers were thought to have different views on the representations of gender in literature.

Practical matters and negotiation of access

It was an unfortunate time to report there during November 2008 as pointed out earlier, as the situation in secondary schools and at the University of Dar es Salaam was a chaotic one. Teachers in all government schools were on strike, as were students at the University of Dar es Salaam. As a result of these strikes, the

schools and the University were closed throughout November and remained so until the middle of December.

Obtaining research clearance

Research clearance was obtained in the relevant education offices. According to regulations governing the conduct of research in Tanzania, the University of Dar es Salaam is mandated to provide research clearance for the members of its academic staff. Fortunately, I am a member of staff in the Department of Literature at this university. I used the research clearance from the university to request permission from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training to conduct research in secondary schools. The research clearance from the Ministry of Education was submitted to the Regional Educational Officers¹³ (REOs) and Regional Administrative Secretaries (RAS) who gave me clearance to submit to the relevant head teachers. I submitted the clearance to the head teachers concerned, together with the consent forms and flyers I had prepared for parents and students. It was then the head teachers' responsibility to contact parents requesting approval to interview their children in schools. After the go-ahead was given, the head teachers then introduced me to the heads of the various English departments, and then to teachers and students. This is the formal system of protocol necessary for securing research clearance in the Tanzanian educational system. However, after finally securing formal clearance, the schools were closing for Christmas and the New Year holiday.

When the schools resumed in mid January they were not, as might be expected, very comfortable in accommodating researchers within their schedules. It was their busiest time of the year and they had just lost the previous two months to the strike. Despite the situation, I had to carry on; and despite the fact that they were behind and had to catch up, I do not feel any concern that it might have affected my data collection since when I got the clearance letters the respondents co-operated

¹³ In Tanzania education system operates under two ministries, namely: the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), which is responsible for the entire education system, and the Prime Minister's Office, responsible for Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO-RALG), which is responsible for a decentralised system, dealing with the day-to-day administration of education (MoEVT, 2008).

fully to interviews. In fact I negotiated with the respondents on the suitable time for them to fit in my research undertakings in their tight schedules.

Developing the research instruments, piloting the interview questions and observation schedule, and some challenges

Developing the research instruments was not a linear process which followed straight forward steps. For instance, there was a need to review the ethical standards of observation (Cohen et al. 2007) and to develop an observation schedule which would cover all the target behaviours such as the interactional setting, the physical setting, and mode of teaching applied, students' activities as well as the non-verbal behaviour and the different categories of behaviour to be observed. The length of the observation period was also another aspect to be planned prior to observing. I had to pilot my observation schedule to see if participants could identify any unclear or ambiguous items to be rectified.

Further, I planned to use all the literary texts on the list for my textual analysis in the first place. As we will see in the next chapter, the English syllabus has set three genres to be taught in literature classes in secondary schools, namely: prose, drama and poetry and there are thirteen texts on the list. But through input I gathered after seminar presentations at the Moray House School of Education, this goal was proven to be too ambitious to pursue. Nevertheless, choosing specific texts was not a simple task; therefore I resolved to stick to those texts used by teachers in classrooms during the observations. These texts were also identified by teachers during interviews.

I also used the opportunity before I started the field work to contact some teachers and piloted my interview questions and observation schedule. I did the piloting to teachers and students in one private school in Dar es Salaam. Private schools have different schedules from the government ones and were less concerned with the strike. The pilot checked for any ambiguities and misunderstandings in the questions. Piloting allowed me to focus on particular areas that had been unclear previously. Participants were encouraged to note any ambiguities and repetitions in the questions. I occasionally noted repetitions myself in recurring phrases such as 'as I have said...' I amended such questions without losing their original aim.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to express their complex and deep issues regarding their experiences and gave them a space to express beyond what was needed. For instance, some of them started to express the inconveniences they faced in their job such as housing problems, poor salary and lack of incentives. One teacher in School B even went further by being too emotional during the interview regarding African traditional practices, as a result, diverged the interview (See Chapter Five). Therefore I had to constantly ensure that the order of the interview was in control.

Regarding education officials, I initially planned to interview just two officials at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) and the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), the first being the policy maker at the Inspectorate department, and the second the curriculum planner. However, these two initial interviewees subsequently introduced me to two additional officials, both of whom I thought might provide some equally relevant and detailed information. The first of these was the Gender Focal Person (this position is currently being introduced at a newly formed office called the 'Gender Desk'), whilst the second was the Educational Materials Approval Committee official (EMAC). The Educational Materials Approval Committee is the only educational body assigned by the Ministry of Education to approve all the text books used in schools and colleges, including literary texts. Thus, a snowball interview sample for education officials was generated.

Moreover, due to the fact that I added two more officials, I was obliged to amend the education officials' interview schedule to accommodate specific questions regarding their positions such as the criteria used by the Educational Materials Approval Committee in selecting the literary texts for form four students and the Gender Official's views about the gender goal (See Appendix E).

Further, the selection of the education officials was planned to be gender sensitive, however that was not possible as officials in some areas are of the same sex, for instance, at the Gender Desk office all were female so only one had to be picked. Similarly, at the Educational Materials Approval Committee office all the officials

were male. As for teachers it was possible to have three females and three males, one from each school. These were purposely chosen as they were responsible for teaching literature in form four classes. Education officials and teachers were interviewed individually.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity, 'where researchers turn a critical gaze towards themselves' (Finlay, 2003: 3), plays an important role in my research due to the fact that my research involved direct interaction with people through interviews. And as an analyst of gender discourse, a female, and more importantly a social researcher, I was tied to the discourse groups I was investigating. In other words, I may have similar views and beliefs to those of the participants in my study that could act as a bar to my objectivity as a researcher. In addition, I was well aware that my experience as a former teacher could affect the data. Therefore, measures were taken to allow myself to focus on the 'researcher' position, for example, piloting my interview questions and observation schedule, and triangulation - that involves diverse educational research methods to ensure valid conclusions. Therefore instead of just observing the teaching-learning process in classroom context, I also had follow up interview with the teachers I observed. In social research it is useful to use more than one method in order to double-check the results (Silverman, 2000). And as a critical analyst, I tried to follow Bloor and Bloor's example (2007:5) by making myself a stranger 'to observe what is going on in a way that an alien studying our planet might do'. Simpson and Tuson (2003) described this as to 'make the familiar strange' by trying to 'detach yourself from your own personal automatic interpretation of what is going on, and try to see events from different perspectives' (p.3).

Timetabling of the research

The interviews were conducted between December 2008 and March 2009. This interval was due to the fact that the appointments had to be re-scheduled and cancelled over time to access participants' availability, especially with the education officials. With the officials, the appointments had to be re-scheduled and cancelled over time to access participants' availability. For instance, an interview was initially

arranged to involve the Commissioner of Education who is the chair of Educational Materials Approval Committee, but due to his tight office schedule it was not possible to carry out the interview as planned. As a result, an interview had to be arranged with another official in the Educational Materials Approval Committee Secretariat. However, this was to my advantage because the Educational Materials Approval Committee Secretariat is the body that carries out the practical work of evaluating the texts. The Manual of Approval Procedures for Educational Materials (Ministry of Education 2005, 2) states clearly that the Educational Materials Approval Committee Secretariat is 'a technical desk with an advisory role in the production, distribution and evaluation of educational materials'.

Thanks to the letters of introduction from both the University of Edinburgh and the University of Dar es Salaam, research clearance was granted speedily at the Ministry of Education. However, gaining access to the officials for interview was a very challenging exercise, despite the given appointments, because of the nature of the work they were involved in. For instance, they had to attend emergency meetings at times and travel unexpectedly.

Ethical considerations

I was aware that classroom observation is a sensitive issue to those involved. Foucault (1977) describes the observer as one who has all the power and control over people s/he observes. Moreover, the researcher was aware that the use of interviews could raise some ethical issues. The exposure involved in being interviewed about the curriculum, on policies and methodology issues, and in interviewing secondary school students about their teachers' teaching methodology, all these could not be underestimated. However, prior to observation and interviews, consent was sought from the given procedures of conducting research at the education institutions, beginning at the University of Dar es Salaam, Ministry of Education and each individual school. Participants were given flyers which explained the aim of observation and interview and asked for their consent, of which was granted as shown in the appendices.

Prior to commencing fieldwork, I prepared consent forms in seeking permission to interview students since 'permissions are a more specific technique for ensuring that research is ethical' (Rose, 2007: 253). I also communicated, in the first place, the purpose of my research and gave potential interviewees the choice of participating in interviews or not, or withdrawing from the study at any time. I ensured the respondents that their personal views would be reported with anonymity and confidentiality. Additionally, I tried as Mason (2002: 83) puts it 'to have a duty to engage in a reflexive and sensitive moral research practice' throughout.

With regard to the use of photographs in chapter six, I sought permission from participants to take photos in classrooms and to reproduce them in my thesis, of which verbal permission was granted. According to Banks (2001), permissions can be in different forms such as formally written consent or verbal. Photos were used not as part of the research methods but rather as a supplement to my arguments. They aimed at 'capturing the texture' and to 'convey the feel' of the classrooms' context in the schools visited (Rose, 2007:247, see also Wells 2004, and Becker 2004 on photos for documentation). The most important thing with photos, argues Economic Social Research Council (ESRC, 2006 available online at

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/Framework_for_Research_Ethics_tcm8-4586.pdf

Last checked April 2011) is to make sure that individuals are not identified in the photos by, for instance, blurring their faces, otherwise, moreover, taking photos in private places where people consider them private might be considered unethical (ESRC, 2008, available online at

<http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/421/1/MethodsReviewPaperNCRM-011.pdf>

Last checked April 2011). On copyright issue of photos Rose (2007: 254) states that if the photos were taken by people [respondents] then they are photos copyright owner you need to seek permission from them, or if the researcher took the photos then s/he is the photo copyright owner and 'you can use them how you want'. In this study, I did not use the photos just the way I wanted to but sought permission from participants as pointed out earlier.

Summary

Chapter Three outlined the research design and methods employed in the study. It explained the analysis that was conducted of particular texts used in the Tanzanian secondary schools. Subsequently, the fieldwork in Tanzania was described. The aim of this section of the study was to understand the policy that guided the selection of the texts, and the way in which the texts were mediated by teachers to students.

Throughout, the focus was on policy makers', teachers' and students' understandings of gender discourses within the literary texts. The chapter discussed the methods adopted in relation to the interviews with policy makers, teachers and students, and of the classroom observation that was undertaken. It also described the data analysis strategies adopted and then moved on to the scope and location of the study.

Consideration was given to practical matters, including the negotiation of access and issues of reflexivity were discussed concerning my position as a researcher and as a teacher educator. Finally, concerns over the range of ethical issues arising in the research were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

In a literate society, books represent a significant portion of the input that people make use of in order to arrive at particular views. What is written in books therefore serves, on the one hand, to reflect what is going on in society, in its totality or in a particular section; and on the other, to establish, maintain and consolidate particular perceptions and prejudices of those who write the books (Yahya-Othman et al, 2009:4).

Introduction

This chapter sets out to address the research question of this study which seeks to know the way gender is represented in literature in the English texts currently used by teachers and students in Tanzanian secondary schools. It provides a textual analysis, which is informed by postcolonial and feminist approaches. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the issues associated with gender identity and power relations which teachers might explore with students in secondary school classrooms. Subsequent chapters investigate whether such explorations actually take place.

This chapter deals with eight texts which were used in classroom observations during fieldwork. It is argued in this study that some writers portray characters in an uncritical way, whilst others do it by aiming at encouraging the audience to engage critically. Moreover, some writers may probably have been aiming at reflecting unconsciously how the society is, even implying that these societies should change. Clearly, most women live very different lives today compared with the 1950s and 1960s when some of these books were written. Nevertheless, the educational value of texts about the past in this context may lie in their potential to stimulate debate about how African societies are changing or may need to change in literature classes.

The chapter starts with an introduction and then describes the nature of the English language syllabus in Tanzanian secondary schools. The chapter then analyses the texts which were written in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. These texts were written when old traditions were still strong, but also at a time when significant political and socio-cultural changes were taking place in society.

Two texts, namely, *Things Fall Apart* and *The Great Ponds*, will be discussed together as they are similar, both in their form and content. Apart from the two novels pointed out, each text, therefore, has been analysed independently, according to its particular genre. The chapter ends by analysing the most recent short story *Passed like a Shadow*, which is written by a Tanzania author Bernard Mapalala in 2006.

The texts under discussion range from novels of considerable length such as *Is It Possible?*, *The Great Ponds* and *Things Fall Apart*; the short story *Passed Like a Shadow* the plays *Three Suitors One Husband* and *The Lion and the Jewel*; the epic *Song of Lawino and Ocol*; and a short poem, *Development*. The following Table summarises the texts' details.

Table 4.1: Texts selected for analysis

Text title	First published	Author & nationality	Gender
<i>Things Fall Apart</i>	1958	Chinua Achebe, Nigerian	Male
<i>The Great Ponds</i>	1969	Elechi Amadi, Nigerian	Male
<i>Is It Possible?</i>	1971	Henry Ole Kulet, Kenyan	Male
<i>Three Suitors, One Husband</i>	1960	Oyono Mbia, Cameroonian	Male
<i>The Lion and the Jewel</i>	1963	Wole Soyinka, Nigerian	Male
<i>Song of Lawino and Ocol</i>	1966	Okot p'Bitek, Ugandan	Male
<i>Development</i>	1980	Kundi Faraja, Tanzanian	Male
<i>Passed Like a Shadow</i>	2006	Bernard Mapalala, Tanzanian	Male

Nature of the syllabus

The English Language Syllabus (2005) is the one guiding the teaching of literature in secondary schools. There is no literature syllabus as such. English is among the core courses for Forms One to Four - known as Ordinary level or O' level - and is optional for Forms Five and Six (known as Advanced level or A' level). Literature commences from Form Three through to Form Six, although literature is not compulsory in Forms Five and Six. Forms One and Two are introduced to simplified texts called 'class readers' and graded class library texts. These are mostly simplified poems and short stories with illustrations to improve students' knowledge of the language by improving their vocabulary, their knowledge of language structure, and text organisation knowledge. These include texts such as Mabala's *Hawa the Bus Driver* and *Mabala the Farmer*.

The list of the texts is prepared by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), which also deals with curriculum planning and the development of teaching-learning resources. However, for decades it has not included Tanzanian fiction writers in its curriculum, whilst West African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Elechi Amadi, Oyono-Mbia, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ousmane Sembène, and some East African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Okot p'Bitek have enjoyed much greater exposure of their work in the secondary schools' curriculum. In fact, the current list of literary books, for the years 2009 to 2011, has included only three Tanzanian authors, namely: S. Ndunguru, B. Mapalala (whose story *Passed like a Shadow* is set in Uganda) and R. Mabala (who compiled a selection of poems drawn from different poets). This number is minimal as there are many writers in Tanzania who are writing in English, as revealed in a current study by Mwaifuge (2009), whose study focused on ideologies in Tanzanian fiction. However, Achebe's texts, especially *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People*, and Amadi's *The Great Ponds* and *The Concubines*, have been included in the English curriculum in Tanzanian schools through to the university level for decades.

The following is the list of literary texts currently used at Tanzanian secondary Ordinary level (Forms Three and Four use the same list; Forms Five and Six use

another list), as recommended and released by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) for use during 2009 – 2011. The texts are written in English language by African writers from different countries of the continent and are used by teachers and students in schools.

PLAYS:

The Lion and the Jewel (Wole Soyinka, 1963)

Three Suitors, One Husband (Oyono Mbia, 1960)

The Black Hermit (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1968)

This Time Tomorrow (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1970)

NOVELS:

A Wreath for Father Mayer of Masasi (S.N.Ndunguru, 1997)

Weep Not Child (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1964)

Spared (S.N.Ndunguru, 2004)

The Interview (S.N.Ndunguru, 2002)

Passed Like a Shadow (Bernard Mapalala, 2006)

Unanswered Cries (Osman Conteh, 2002)

POEMS:

Song of Lawino and Ocol (P'Bitek, 1979)

Summons (Richard Mabala, ed. 1980)

David Rubadiri's (ed.) (1981) *Growing up with Poetry*, Heinemann

According to the currently-in-use *English Language Syllabus for Secondary Schools* (2005: 61), the overall objective for teaching literature is 'to make students read the texts, analyse and relate them to their real life situations', for reasons explained in the introduction. The discussion of shared themes in *Things Fall Apart* and *The Great Ponds* begins with a synopsis of each of the texts.

***Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958)**

Things Fall Apart, Achebe's first novel, tells the story of a successful man named Okonkwo whose tragic demise marks the end of African unity, and of the traditional beliefs and culture at the onset of colonialism. *Things Fall Apart* has stood the test of time for being uniquely written employing African oral traditions and has been praised for utilising valued aspects of African traditions in his work, including songs, proverbs, and stories within a larger story. Achebe (1975) himself insisted on the didactic roles of these folktales. Achebe was writing deliberately for an international audience in order to explain African traditions to the colonialists and to underline African essential difference from the west. He deliberately focuses on the violence intrinsic in traditional gender relations, in a way which is intended to be shocking to western sensibilities.

Moreover, Achebe's command of the English language and the utilisation of African oral traditions are exemplary. He successfully utilises a foreign language to express ideas about an Igbo-African society based at the fictitious village of Umuofia in Nigeria. Published in 1958, this book brought Achebe fame and has been translated into fifty languages worldwide. Achebe is considered by many (see Chinweizu et al. 1980; Palmer 1979; Gikandi 1991 and Klein 1986) within and outwith Africa to be the 'father' of the African novel, just as Daniel Defoe is to the English novel.

***The Great Ponds* (Amadi, 1969)**

The Great Ponds gives a skilfully drawn account of a fierce civil war between two West African villages of the same clan, the Erekwí. We discover that from time immemorial, the Chiolu and Aliakoro people have always been rivals over their right to fish in the Pond of Wagaba, which is richer in fish than the other ponds; each party claims the Pond as theirs, and that it had been inherited from their forefathers. It is an African mythological story set in eastern Nigeria during the pre-colonial period. It describes the ancient African life and the people's cultural belief systems. Two of the main characters are Olumba from Chiolu village, and his rival, Wago, from Aliakoro. The last chapters tell us about the outbreak of the pandemic influenza, *wonjo*, of 1918, which reportedly claimed the lives of millions of people around the world.

The construction and treatment of masculinity versus femininity in the novels

While women in these two texts are portrayed and constructed with qualities such as passivity, powerlessness, vulnerability, compassion and sensitivity, on the contrary, men are portrayed differently with qualities such as power, dominance and control. Men have physical strengths, they are adventurous and competitive. Men's courage, sense of purpose and determination in their life are the examples drawn in the books to be emulated, while the qualities exemplified by women are not.

These first two novels adopt a very similar treatment of the characters. Like Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, Amadi in *The Great Ponds* introduces Olumba, the main character, whose characteristics are somewhat similar to that of Okonkwo. The readers are immediately informed what kind of a character Olumba is. He is described as a successful man and highly respected in the village. He is strong; his physique built up with 'solid muscle', a mighty warrior, and a great wrestler whose name was *agadaga*, meaning 'strength'. (p.8). Olumba in *The Great Ponds* is also a reliable leader who has successfully led the village fighters through difficult missions. Similarly, Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* is a very strong man who breathes heavily and walks strongly; he 'rarely felt fatigue' (*Things Fall Apart*, p.10). His fame in Umuofia is due to his successes, which include his prowess as a wrestler and his ownership of barns of yam; the number of wives he has is also praiseworthy.

Many wives symbolise a man's wealth. That is why the narrator also shows us the other 'wealthy man in Okonkwo's village who had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children' (13). The writer makes no mistake in letting the readers know exactly what opinion Olumba and Okonkwo have regarding the boys and girls of their village in the following conversation between Olumba and the young man, Ikechi:

Your father has a lot to teach you about stalking. You youngsters are so clumsy,' said Olumba. Ikechi smiled. He knew only too well Olumba's opinion of boys in his age group. As far as Olumba was concerned they were just a bunch of girls (*The Great Ponds*, p.7).

According to Olumba, boys like Ikechi, unlike girls, are supposed to be grown up and know lots of things in preparation for their married life. This is also elaborated upon when Ikechi asks a question about a rainbow. Olumba wonders what Ikechi

will do when he gets married and why his own children ask him such simple questions. As the story develops, we see how Ikechi was prepared to become a man. Participating in the Pond of Wagaba fight at his tender age, together with experienced warriors like Olumba, was a good sign for Ikechi. Later, as he partakes in the victory dance with the rest of fighters, everybody, especially the girls, admire Ikechi; he had become a real man. Fighting earned both boys and men respect and those men who did not have 'notches on their bows' were considered to be like women (*The Great Ponds*, p.92). Ikechi works alongside Olumba throughout the story and is destined to marry Chisa, the chief's daughter.

We can also see in *Things Fall Apart* that Okonkwo's wish for his son, Nwoye, is to become a real man. He tells his son only 'masculine stories of violence and bloodshed' and the reason for this is well articulated in page 37. He wants Nwoye to grow up to be a 'tough man capable of ruling his father's household when Okonkwo dies.' To be more specific, Nwoye is being trained to 'be able to control his women-folk' (p.37). Okonkwo himself ruled his household with a 'strong hand' and thus he feels he has a moral duty to pass this on to his male descendants. Unfortunately, Nwoye breaks his father's heart for favouring his mother's stories, which Okonkwo describes as being 'silly as all women's stories' 'for foolish women and children' (pp.38, 53). This is how boys and girls grow up, believing that women are foolish and silly. It is not an inborn knowledge, but rather a learned and acquired one and the author sees this and challenges it.

Even farm products such as yams symbolise manliness. The crops are grouped according to gender. Yam is referred to as 'the king of crops' because it is a 'man's crop'. Other crops like coco-yams, beans and cassava are described as women's crops as only women and children would harvest them. Paradoxically, however, it is the women who contributed most to the labour of the yam harvest, as we can see from the following quotation:

Yam, the king of crops, was a very exacting king. For three or four moons it demanded hard work and constant attention from cock-crow till the chickens went back to roost. The young tendrils were protected from earth-heat with rings of sisal leaves. As the rains became heavier the women planted maize, melons and the beans between the yam mounds. The women weeded the farm

three times at definite periods in the life of the yams, neither early nor late (*Things Fall Apart*, p.24).

All the chiefs and elders of the villages were men. In *Things Fall Apart* all nine *egwugwu*, who were judges in the traditional court - Okonkwo among them - were men. They symbolise the hierarchical political rule. In addition, all the renowned wrestlers and warriors in both novels are men.

The pre-colonial African world was a man's world and it explains why the stories centre on male protagonists. Even the language used in general is in favour of men. For example, most proverbs and slogans used in the novels tell us more about men, while the role of women is seen only by implication through men, by using the generic subject – man. Here are some examples from *Things Fall Apart*:

'A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches' (p.46). This means¹⁴ that a child who becomes a 'real man' can be identified from his early childhood.

'A man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself' (p.68). This means that a man will be paid back for the evil he has done.

'An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb' (p.15). This means people are uncomfortable when negative descriptions similar to their own traits are given.

'A baby on its mother's back does not know that the way is long' (p.71). This means that children who still depend on their parents (mothers) do not experience the burden of life's difficulties.

While it is true that traditional Africans may find these proverbs familiar, it is also true that they depict African societies. These are not Achebe's proverbs but he has drawn them from African oral traditions to serve the purpose of his novel.

Stratton (1994) argues that the plot in *Things Fall Apart* develops around Okonkwo, who is driven by the fear of becoming a woman. I would call this 'the motif of deep fear' as manifested not only by Okonkwo, but by all men in both novels, especially the protagonists. When Olumba in *The Great Ponds* took the oath for his village, the chief and leaders prescribed some rules to ensure his safety. One of them was that he was not allowed to climb trees and thus Ikechi was assigned to tap Olumba's palm-

¹⁴ All literal meanings given to the proverbs are mine.

wine trees, whose response was that they had turned him into a woman (*The Great Ponds*, p.91). Moreover, one can see throughout the novel that the protagonists would do anything it takes to make them real men.

The motif of deep fear is strongly demonstrated by Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, who is driven by the fear of becoming a woman like his father, Unoka. We read that 'agbala was not only another name for a woman, but also a man who had taken no title' p.10). Unoka was nicknamed as *agbala* since he was lazy, a debtor and thus died poor. This became the driving force which positively motivates Okonkwo to work very hard to avoid inheriting the same name as his father. As a result he becomes a successful farmer. This is a positive trait the writer would wish readers to emulate.

Due to this fear, Okonkwo can never explicitly show his love to his children or wives because that would be considered a weakness. The same applies to Olumba (see, for example, *The Great Ponds*, p.56) and all the other men in these texts as they cannot openly demonstrate their emotions of love or compassion:

Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worth demonstrating was strength (*Things Fall Apart*, p.20).

He was also fond of his daughter Ezinma but he could not display it openly for the same reason. Moreover, we are told of the story of Ndulue and his wife, Ozoemena, who are described as having 'one mind', since Ndulue shared every part of his life with his wife (p. 48). Okonkwo mocks this kind of a man by saying that, 'I thought he was a strong man'. Okonkwo wonders how a man could show so much weakness to his wife in this way. He declares such actions to be the way in which a man becomes as soft as a woman (p.129). This kind of mindset of power relations – one which gives no value to gender relations - dictates the entire flow of these novels. Such a top-down hierarchy has always been in place and the calibre of a man such as Okonkwo is the best illustration of it.

Telling a man that he behaved like a woman is an insult in its crudest sense. Elsewhere in the story, Okonkwo was forced to apologise to his colleague, Osugo, for calling him a woman. On the contrary, in such a context it is a positive thing to

tell a woman she is behaving like a man, and, in fact, for Okonkwo, his daughter Enzima acted 'perfectly' like a boy and he wished she was a boy. The insult of men behaving like women disturbed even women in the novels, as, for example, in *The Great Ponds* when Olumba starved himself to death following his oath taking. Nyoma confronted her husband:

I prefer to die than to see you behave the way you are doing. In the midday of your life you are turning into a woman and you expect us to remain calm...What has come over you my lord?...where is your manhood? (*The Great Ponds*, p.127).

The narrator, however, emphasises here that Nyoma said this in 'hysterics', and was not herself, as a woman would not dare talk to her husband in that way. We are promised that it was the first time that Nyoma had raised her voice to express an opinion, and it was quite certainly the last. Meanwhile, *dibia* Igwu decided to put aside his priesthood for a moment in order to fight with Wago, rather than swallowing the humiliation he had been subjected to:

'Wago, I am a man like you!' retorted Igwu.

'You are a woman and weak one at that!' answered Wago.

'Let's get out now and wrestle' suggested Igwu.

'I am ready,' Wago responded and they proceeded to have the match (*The Great Ponds*, p.109).

Moreover, in the episode of the Pond of Wagaba's fight in *The Great Ponds*, two poachers from Aliakoro village are captured and held prisoner in Chiolu; later, when one of the prisoners cried, he was referred to by the guards as a 'woman' and he did not like it (*The Great Ponds*, p. 19).

Ironically, the deep fear which haunts Okonkwo throughout his whole life contributes to the genesis of his downfall. Accidentally, he kills a clansman during a burial ceremonial dance. Traditionally, this crime is classified as a 'female crime', which forces Okonkwo to go into exile to his mother's land in Mbata. The mother's land provides refuge and protection to Okonkwo (see *Things Fall Apart*, p.126). Although 'a child belongs to its father', as Okonkwo's uncle puts it, the 'Mother is Supreme'. This is a contradictory way of defining the patriarchal and matriarchal

systems in Africa. Yet we see that it is the mothers who show the strongest passions for their children (see pp. 95-100). Seven years later, when he returns to Umuofia from exile, he wants to show people that he is still a man. He faces the white missionary and kills him. What follows this event is his total destruction. He commits suicide and is 'buried like a dog', as tradition does not allow people who die by committing suicide to be buried.

The status of males versus females

Both novelists Achebe and Amadi make it clear that men in their villages had different jobs from women. Women cook, look after children, clean the house and serve their husbands (*The Great Ponds*, pp.18, 36, 39). The kitchens were even known as mothers' places. As noted earlier, women have throughout the story been grouped together with their children and so do their jobs. For instance, the narrator says: 'While women and children were busy sweeping out the compounds, the men gathered at the wrestling arena in response to the *ikoro*' (p.17). In addition, whenever something was wrong with women in a certain household it was revealed that the compound would be unswept. In another example in *Things Fall Apart*, when Ezinma asked if she could bring her father a chair, Okonkwo firmly replies, 'No, that is a boy's job' (p.32). This is how sex roles are simply learned, through socializing agents such as parents.

When Olumba's wives were sick and no one could cook, he tried to borrow his cousin's daughter to come along to his house to do the cooking. Realising that things in his cousin's house were no better there, the confused Olumba tried to cook as a last resort. Luckily enough, his terminally ill wife gathered herself up from the mat where she had been lying to come to his rescue. 'You will cook only when I am dead,' retorted Nyoma, resuming her place in the kitchen (*The Great Ponds*, p.161). The author clearly reminds the reader that this was not Olumba's fault; cooking was not his job:

He knew these things were beyond him. Brought up by a warrior father who taught him that all feminine chores were unmanly, he simply did not know how to set about these things. The prospect of cooking scared him (*The Great Ponds*, p.161).

By being scared to cook the author shows us how a small act like cooking can make a warrior like Olumba look weak. Generally, men in the two novels were involved in work such as fishing, hunting and tapping wine whilst the farming work was mainly done by women.

In many African societies baby boys are more welcome in families than baby girls – and this is often the case in today's world. If the parents are blessed to have both a boy and a girl and if it happens that the girl seems to be more intelligent than the boy, the parents would openly say how they wish that the girl was a boy. The authors in these novels reveal the same perspective. When Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* portrays Okonkwo, who constantly wished his daughter Ezinma had been a boy, he bases this on a real social habit, which is very common in Africa. 'She should have been a boy,' (p.44) he states, and again, 'If Ezinma had been a boy I would have been happier. She has the right spirit' (p.46). At the end of part two when Okonkwo and his family prepare to return to Umuofia after spending seven years in exile, we are reminded again of his wish. 'I wish she were a boy. She understands things so perfectly' (p.122). To emphasise the point the narrator adds, 'He never stopped regretting that Ezinma was a girl' (p.122). Indeed, this is typically African. The value of a boy in African tradition cannot be overemphasised. Many women have suffered for having borne only girls. They have been called names or, in some clans, divorced or forced to accept polygamy under the claim that the husband should procreate a boy. This theme is also observed in modern novels such as *Parched Earth* (Lema, 2000).

While polygamy is common in many parts of Africa one might wonder whether the reasons for it are well known. From the books under discussion, it would seem that all the 'important men' in Chiolu and Aliakoro had to have more than one wife for prestigious reasons. These men included the chiefs Eze Diali and Eze Okehi, the elders Chituru and Wezume, and warriors such as Olumba and Wago in *The Great Ponds*. Second, many children could be borne from these wives, and more importantly they could bear *sons*, the prospective heirs. That is why Olumba loved Oda more than the other wives because she bore him a son, their only son. He says:

I struggled and married two more wives. They produced females. Nyoma's only son died. You know how. But I could not die without an heir; my compound had to stand, my family name had to be perpetuated. I married Oda hoping she would give me a son. I called one dibia after another and spent all I had in unheard-of sacrifices (*The Great Ponds*, p.140).

Boys would be heirs, and that was the point. It is also an economic reason that the sons would eventually also marry and bring in more women in the household for human labour, whilst girls would ultimately marry and join other families. When Olumba's son, Nchelem, was sick, Olumba could not resist the thought that his only son was going to die. It was frightening and he was helplessly miserable. He even envied his neighbour who had six sons from his one wife. Female children here were not the main focus and that is why the death of his daughter, Adada, went almost unnoticed – or, at least Olumba was not as shaken as when the boy fell ill. One of the most valuable thing boys were commissioned to inherit was the surname. Having only girls who would eventually marry and adopt husbands' surnames was a tragic occurrence to a patriarchal clan. We occasionally find women as being the central focus in some events in order to symbolise fertility. For example, during Akueke's wedding ceremony, the bride's relatives are heard to say:

'We are giving you our daughter today. She will be a good wife to you. She will bear you nine sons like the mother of our town'.

'Ee-e-e!' the crowd agrees in unison' (*Things Fall Apart*, p.82).

At the age of sixteen on her wedding day, Akueke is reminded of 'motherhood' as a metaphor for fertility. Her obligations in marriage are outlined as being a good wife, while she is also expected to reproduce children, without forgetting the obligation to bear sons. Achebe makes use of the simile *like* to compare Akueke and the 'mother of town' who bore nine sons.

Unheard and silenced women

If Achebe and Amadi created the language used by their characters, as in the case of the protagonist Okonkwo, it could be argued that they wanted to criticise society's view of women. The novels constantly portray women as playing a silent role. Even when women try to speak out they are immediately silenced, as the following examples from *Things Fall Apart* illustrate:

‘Do what you are told, woman,’ said Okonkwo.
‘When did you become one of the ndichie (elders) of Umuofia?’
‘Nwoye’s mother took Ikemefuna to her hut and asked no more questions’
(*Things Fall Apart*, pp.10-11).

The above example appears in the narrative when Okonkwo hands over the strange boy, Ikemefuna, for his first wife to look after. According to Okonkwo, his wife is not supposed to ask how long the boy is going to stay with them; her role is to accept the boy. Okonkwo just gives orders. We also learn that when Okonkwo is in exile in Mbata, he orders his daughters, Ezinma and Obiageli, to refuse all suitors so that they could marry in Umuofia upon their return so that he could use them to restore his respect among his clansmen. He says:

‘There are many good and prosperous people here, but I shall be happy if you marry in Umuofia when we return home.’ He continues:

‘Your half-sister, Obiageli, will not understand me, but you can explain to her’ (*Things Fall Apart*, p.122).

Of course, the girls obey him and the narrator praises their obedience as an ‘understanding’, especially Ezinma, who is described as someone able to read her father’s mind. Unlike their brother, Nwoye, who deserted the house after he was prohibited to attend church, the girls learnt to be silent from their childhood and dared not query their father’s advice.

We also learn that women in Umuofia ‘never asked questions about the most powerful and the most secret cult in the clan’ (*Things Fall Apart*, p.63). Instead, they were used to build *egwugwu*’s house which was used as the clan’s court. When the hearing begins in the court, the women were outsiders as such sessions were only for men. Even meetings frequently held in the market place were never attended by women, and when women observed something they kept their thoughts or opinions to themselves (*Things Fall Apart*, p. 64).

In bride price negotiations the mother of Akueke (the bride) does not participate in the process other than to be told of the decision at the end – ‘Go and tell Akueke’s mother that we have finished’ (p.51). She is informed so as to fulfil her duty of bringing some food to the men who were negotiating her daughter’s price for marriage, and for the whole village, during the wedding. Even the girl herself is not

allowed to participate in the process. Indeed, there are times when marrying would be impossible simply because men have not come to a consensus regarding the bride price, even although the suitor may be the girl's own choice.

In *The Great Ponds* things are not much different. While the storyline is dominated by men's encounters, we hear very little about girls and women. Paradoxically, at the ending of the story when there are many deaths as a result of the disease, we are told that there are more deaths amongst women than men. This should not surprise the reader as it can be understood that, as most women play only minor roles, their demise did not mean a lot. In addition, it can be said that more women might well die if they eat less well than men as the text seems to indicate.

In both stories we hear more voices of men than of women. This could be because of the fact that in the wrestling arena and the village rituals the men enjoyed a platform to give their opinions while women were not allowed to attend. Throughout the novel we learn that when the *ikoro* sounded, only men were supposed to gather at the wrestling arena. Women did not know what was going on there for *ikoro* was men's business and women 'could not be entrusted with top secrets' of the village (p.17). Even in *Things Fall Apart*, the market place meetings were only attended by men who gathered there when the drum sounded. The domains mentioned, such as the wrestling arena and the market place, are very important arenas for communication. It seems obvious that when the women got together in 'their domains', such as in the kitchen or when looking after the children, they would most probably talk a lot and have many opinions about issues. However, their domains, and what goes on in them, are not described in these texts. Even at the family level women's voices remained unheard as the kind of relationship at home was mainly like that of a master and servant. This is depicted throughout the stories in the way women address their husbands as 'lords', 'my lord, your food is ready' and in their response of 'yes, my lord', as that is what they were taught to do. In the episode when Olumba and his team lost the battle, the wives did not have strength enough to ask Olumba what had happened. 'They did not ask him questions. They knew he would explain the situation to them afterwards *if he thought it necessary*' (*The Great Ponds*: p. 55)

(emphasis mine). All they could do was to sit around him and say nothing - a very unique way of trying to encourage someone to speak to you.

Over the course of the texts we see the magnitude of the women's silence. Readers are rarely allowed to explore their feelings, opinions, likes and dislikes, in the way that we can read of elsewhere in literature, as, for example, from the eras of romanticism and realism with female characters such as Emma in Flaubert's (1957) *Madame Bovary*, and Thérèse in Zola's (1867) *Thérèse Raquin*. In the first of these texts, we see Emma being tired of life in the countryside, living with her single parent father. She dreams of one day getting out and marrying the man of her dreams in a town where her life would be better and more meaningful. Her dream comes true as she meets and marries a doctor but as her dream fades and reality sets in, she pursues other men who also disappoint her, and ultimately she commits suicide. Similarly, Thérèse is bored of living with her authoritarian aunt, Madame Raquin, especially when she is forced to marry her ever sick cousin, Camille. She dreams of getting out of this marriage in order to marry someone she can really love. She meets Laurent and together they murder Camille so that they can marry, but their guilty consciences drive both to commit suicide.

It can be argued that although both the female characters described above seem to be unrealistic in their pursuit of the 'best' possible husband, in both cases, at least they are constructed with some sense of having 'dreams' about their future. Unlike Emma and Thérèse, however, the characters of Ojiugo, Nwoye's mother, Wogari, Nyoma and the other women (in *Things Fall Apart* and *The Great Ponds*) are totally silent. We do not hear them even speaking of their dreams, let alone pursuing them.

Achebe's and Amadi's female characters are not immediately given proper names. Readers have to get used to the idea of them as Okonkwo's and Olumba's first, second and third wives. When this becomes monotonous we are introduced to their other names - named after their first-born children, like the 'mother of Nwoye'. Although we are not told Nwoye's mother's actual name until the end of the novel, this is not strange in Africa, as in some cases even children do not know the real names of their mothers. However, this is not unusual among many African women as it is a matter of pride for them to be named after their children – just like other

people who prefer 'Mrs somebody' - but detrimental to those who do not have children yet, or to those who have decided not to have a child. In the African context, there has not been a significant change in this through time. That is, it is still the same culture today as it was years ago, especially so among uneducated people.

Domestic violence

Both novels depict domestic violence. For instance, in *The Great Ponds*, apart from wrestling and fighting, another measure of determining one's manliness was the beating of wives. We can see this in the last two chapters of the book, when an outbreak of *wonjo* was spreading rapidly. The seriousness of this disease was such that men couldn't even beat their wives (p.171). The disease made men physically so weak that they did not have the energy to beat, even though the beating of women was legitimised by men. Further, in *Things Fall Apart*, 'Okonkwo 'ruled his household with a heavy hand' (p.9). He occasionally gives his son a beating under the pretext that he does not want him to be like his grandfather, Unoka. Okonkwo also regularly beats his wives as we are told that 'No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children and *especially his women* he was not really a man' (p.37) (the emphasis is original). Okonkwo beat his son and wives because of this fear, even during the Week of Peace, which traditionally was a sacred week when men were not supposed to beat their loved ones. He even killed Ikemefuna, despite the gods' warning that he should not touch him as the boy was like his own son.

The narrator in *Things Fall Apart* explains that Ekwefi, who is the only woman among Okonkwo's wives to have the courage to speak out, muttered something about his guns 'that never shot'. In so doing, she is almost killed by Okonkwo by the same gun. And when he beats one of his wives, no one is allowed to say anything. He beats her to please himself. We are told of another character called Uzowulu who beats his wife Mgbafo every single day (p.65). His wife had been ill and had miscarried because of the beatings. Yet he claims that, 'That woman standing there is my wife, Mgbafo. I married her with my money and my yams. I do not owe my in-laws anything' (p.64). This is the only justification given for the beatings. When

Nwoye is beaten for attending the Missionary's church, the women could do nothing to stop him, other than screaming.

However, there was some sort of justice for those men like Okonkwo and Uzowulu who carried out too many beatings. For example, Okonkwo was punished for beating his youngest wife, although he was punished simply for beating her during the week of peace. In addition, Evil Forest, who was in charge of Uzowulu's case, commented that 'it is not brave when a man fights with a woman' (*Things Fall Apart*, p.66). By this comment, the author might be suggesting that the woman was also fighting back, although it could also have just been a case of verbal interaction between the two

Positive roles for women: power, beauty and purity

The only women to have a voice in *Things Fall Apart* and in *The Great Ponds* are those supernatural women who seemingly had extra powers beyond everyday explanation. These are Ani, the goddess and source of all fertility; traditional priestesses like Chielo and Chika; and the medicine woman who had only one leg. Only these women could shout at men, as for example, when Chielo shouts at Okonkwo on the night she wants to take Ezinma to Agbala, even though Okonkwo did not want to let her go (p.71). The narrator also tells us in retrospect how Chika shouted at Unoka. (pp.12, 13). However, we do not see the same pattern in *The Great Ponds*, where all the priests are males.

Moreover, the eldest wife is also powerful since she denotes trust and provides a shoulder to cry on during a husband's tribulations. There is an African proverb in the Acoli tribe mentioned in the 'introduction' of *Song of Lawino and Ocol* which says, 'Your first wife is your mother.' As Olumba takes an oath, a code of conduct is stipulated that he must eat only what his first wife cooks for six months (p.90), and he depended heavily on Nyoma throughout his oath. This is one of the rare occasions when we see Olumba giving his wife some respite because he was terrified by the inward voice which told him he was going to die:

The voice, as Olumba called it, was always with him, guarding against optimism. That is why Olumba allowed Nyoma to talk confidence into him. She acted as a visible agent against this voice of doom within him. He sought more and more of her company, letting her talk as much as possible when

they were together. Nyoma improved on her performances when she noticed her husband's growing dependence on her (*The Great Ponds*, p.128).

Obviously this dependence did not amuse Nyoma at all; she did not like to have such a husband, for such a behavioural change was a threat to manliness:

But she was also sad over the change in him. No one cared much for a weak-willed husband whose morale was a plaything in his wife's hands. However, she hoped he would revert to normal when the present threat to his life (the oath) was removed (*The Great Ponds*, 128).

We also see chief Okehi relying on his eldest wife to consult the priest when things became tough. His wife recollects the way he ignored her advice when she says, 'Why can't men take advice? They think they are wise but they are foolish as a baby in arms' (p.72). This is quite a rare occurrence, to hear a woman's voice coming through in this way. Indeed, in both novels men would go back to their senior wives when they were troubled and needed assistance. And this is relevant to African societies; when a polygamous man is seriously ill they would hasten him to his first wife's house. As for the youngest wife, she is the favourite because it is the latest choice and that is why Amadi was careful in selecting which women were to be abducted. It was Olumba's and Okehi's youngest wives who were kidnapped in order to make them feel the pinch. Moreover, the role of the middle wife seems to be as a substitute in case something happen to the other two. For example, when Nyoma died, Wogari was there to take care of Olumba before his favourite, Oda, showed up.

Further, during negotiation for the kidnapped women, the Chiolu men calculated, according to them, that one man was equal to four women or more. When Wago objected to this, Olumba asked him sternly:

'Are you equal to your wife?' Olumba asked.

'There is no place in the world where one man is equated to one woman. Our village maintains that one man is equal to four women or more,' Olumba explained' (*The Great Ponds*, p.58).

Women were also heard admiring Eze Wosu's expensive clothes, saying that they were worth enough to pay the bride price for at least four wives. This is how easy it was to show the worthiness of something by comparing it to how many brides it would buy. Women prided themselves on their great skill in soup preparation and

they ‘were thrilled by the descriptions of the fantastic displays of dresses by the Ezes’ (pp.76,88). There is nothing in the nature of a serious description about them in *The Great Ponds*.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the two women whom Okonkwo loves the most are described as ‘crystals of beauty’. These are Ekwefi, and her daughter, Ezinma. It is through them that we see the gentle side of Okonkwo’s personality. Olumba behaves similarly when Oda shows up at home (*The Great Ponds*, pp. 180-2). It is shown for the first time that Okonkwo makes jokes to Ekwefi (p.76).

In other places in *Things Fall Apart*, we learn that the wedding ceremony goes together with a ‘confession’ in public. The bride is interrogated aggressively:

‘Remember that if you do not answer truthfully you will suffer or even die at child-birth,’ she is warned by her sister in law, Njide.

‘How many men have lain with you since my brother first expressed the desire to marry you?’

‘None,’ she replied simply.

‘Answer truthfully,’ urged the other women.

‘None?’ asked Njide.

‘None,’ she repeated.

‘Swear on this staff of my fathers,’ said Uchendu (the old father-in-law).

‘I swear,’ said the bride.

By contrast, the bridegroom does not have to undergo this procedure.

To summarise, these two novels written a decade apart, are concerned with portraying African culture in which male dominance and female subservience are essential ingredients, a system of power relations maintained through violence and economic dependency. These texts clearly provide opportunities for teachers to encourage students to critique traditional and modern forms of gender relations in African society. However, taken at face value there is a danger that the books might be read uncritically, and be used to support rather than interrogate traditional gender relations.

Marriage and gender relations also feature as important themes in the next text, *Is It Possible?*

***Is It Possible?* (Ole – Kulet, 1971)**

Is It Possible? is written by a Kenyan, reflecting life in Maasai societies during the struggle for independence. The story is also set in Arusha, Tanzania, during the same period of the struggle for the flag of independence in both countries. The narrator is a Maasai boy –Lerionka (Henry), who narrates his own journey motif for the quest of education from an impossible background of Maasai tradition which does not, as represented by his father, believe in the benefits of formal education. The father's doubt is that his only son cannot afford to have an education as well as preserving his own Maasai identity. He wonders whether or not it is possible to hold a spear in one hand, the sticks in the other, and a number of books at the same time. Spears and sticks stand for the Maasai practice of herding their cattle, especially when carried out by the young men called moran. Lerionka's hunger for education and his implacable determination to pursue it builds toward an extraordinary plot and provides a positive answer to the question raised by his father. The main character in the novel is a male but his mother is mentioned throughout the story's background.

Education

Is It Possible? explores the issue of education as one of its main themes. It is the boys, Lerionka and his mates, who are supposed to attend school. In Lerionka's village we see that all of the fifteen children whose parents had obeyed the government's order to take them to school were boys. Girls were not taken to school, and we are not even told how they reacted to that: there is actually no mention of them at all. The omission of such details demonstrates the absence of focus on girls and women. Perhaps the author thought he could speak about the issue of education better through the eyes of a boy or was reflecting the realities that in the 1970s Kenyan girls were often left out from attending school.

Indeed, when Lerionka tells us the story about his family, his extended family, and about their cattle, we hear nothing about girls; they do not exist in the story. As pointed out earlier, only mothers are mentioned in the course of their service to the family, especially in providing food and milk, or in milking the cows, washing up the milk calabashes and smearing the top of their huts with animal dung. When the Masaai patriarchy are warned that if they do not let the boys go to school the government will sell all their cattle and imprison the men, leaving the women and children to suffer from hunger, the chief attempts to persuade his people to let the boys go. He also advises Lerionka's father to 'marry another wife to get more sons and let Lerionka go' (p. 14).

The novel is full of male characters and male encounters. It is rich in men's experiences. Even when they talk about history and war, the main themes concern only men - how men gained riches and succeeded, or how they failed. Women might well have concerns about these matters, but we are told very little about them. It is the men's experiences that are described, as, for example, when Selelo chats with his friend in a local bar, joking about their memories of WW2:

'Do you remember that hard night when we slept on that cold rock in Ethiopia?' Selelo asked.

'Yes, it was horrible. The only difficulty was that we were fighting on the white men's side and yet they too were fighting other whites. It was very difficult to know who to shoot and who not to.' They both laughed (*Is It Possible*, p. 124).

When female characters appear, such as mothers, teachers and other adults, they tend to encourage the boys to be men. For example, Lerionka was told by his female teacher, 'Don't be shy, you are not a girl' (p.27). It is in this way that boys in this world learn about the traits expected of them - traits such as independence and aggression.

Maasai culture regarding marriage

In the Maasai culture a woman has no voice and marriages are normally arranged by male parents. We learn from the story that Lerionka's mother's marriage was

arranged by her brother. Further, male strangers can enter a house and sleep with any woman in the house on condition that he has put a spear at the door prior to his entering. When the husband of that wife comes and sees the spear he respects the male stranger and thus finds another place to sleep. This theme is also depicted in *Song of Lawino and Ocol*, as the poet wonders:

Tell me, you young man from Masaai land
They call you moran
I see your brother's spear
Planted at the door, of your hut
You know he is inside
Sleeping with your wife!
Would you let a man, 'Borrow' your wife?... (p.138)

This question may as well mean 'are you a real man, as defined by traditions?' It would also be appropriate if we heard from the women who were used in such a way, but unfortunately their voices are hidden. It is reportedly a common occurrence in the Maasai tradition for a man to legitimately sleep with other women, apart from his wife, even with those women who are married to his brothers. The poet here raises genuine concern over morals and cultural lifestyles of this kind, especially in an age of HIV/AIDS. Women are the most affected in such circumstances as they are expected to neither protest, nor refuse.

Regarding this, Lerionka reveals what kind of woman his mother was when asking her opinion about him going to Arusha in Tanzania (*Is It Possible?*, p.43):

Mother did not like speaking her mind unless she was asked to. When asked, she did not like going against what my father said. First she liked to hear what my father said before she would say what was in her mind. This attitude towards my father made quarrels very limited'

It could be argued that it was difficult for Lerionka's mother to comment on his departure; Lerionka was everything to her. Given the social stigma attached to childlessness in her culture, the only child she had was a source of happiness and she could not imagine the absence of her son. She opted to reserve her opinion, or rather conform to whatever opinion was given by her husband. Yet it sounds as if the author through the persona is implying in that last phrase that this was an effective way to minimize quarrels within the family household. The author also goes some way to unmasking the Maasai culture where only boys matter. Even the government

required that only boys should attend school. Today, however, things are very different as the governments of many countries strive to provide equal opportunity in education for all children.

Again, these texts are presenting rather than overtly critiquing traditional African cultural practices with regard to control of women's sexuality. A skilled teacher would be able to use texts such as these to encourage pupils to critique aspects of African culture, but if presented uncritically children might be encouraged to accept the power relations reflected in this culture.

Three Suitors, One Husband (Oyono – Mbia, 1960)

A more light-hearted view of marriage is found in *Three Suitors, One Husband*, a comedic play set in Mvoutessi village in Cameroon; it addresses themes relevant to many African countries from the 1960s through to today's generation. Juliette, the main character is a secondary student. A fellow student named Oko becomes her fiancé. Back home her parents and relatives have already received a bride price from two other separate suitors, both unknown to Juliette. Ndi is the first suitor, a young peasant who has paid 100,000 francs. The second, Mbia, has outwitted Ndi by paying 200,000 francs as a dowry. As a suitor, he is more preferable than Ndi since he is a 'wealthy' senior civil servant who is expected to help out in his in-laws' family problems when he marries Juliette. When Juliette arrives home and insists on marrying her own choice, Oko, the entire family and extended family make it clear that they will only allow Juliette to marry anyone who comes to them with a dowry of 300,000 francs. This total is calculated to pay back the dowries of Ndi and Mbia that were paid earlier, both of which have now been stolen from Atangana's house. It turns out that it is none other than Juliette who has stolen the 300,000 from his father's house, having given it to Oko to pay the bride price. The play ends with Oko succeeding in marrying Juliette free of charge. As in the early texts, there are opportunities here for teachers to encourage students to critically examine the dowry system which is still used in some African societies.

Credentials of traditional African women

Women are portrayed as being more **hard-working** than men. As the curtain opens in *Three Suitors One Husband*, the scene is set in Atangana's main house one afternoon, mostly full of men occupying themselves with unimportant things, while waiting impatiently for their lunch. Atangana is making a basket, old Abessolo is smoking and drinking some wine, while sculpting; Ondua and Oyono are also drinking wine while playing a game to pass the time. The playwright reminds the audience that 'The women do not drink, of course' (p.11); instead, they are preoccupied with domestic chores. Another woman, Makrita, is off to the farm and when she returns the women exchange information about the farm, which naturally the men have no idea about. Unlike in the other texts like *Things Fall Apart* and *The Great Ponds*, here in this text we have at least an insight in to the women's domain and we hear their voices, even though this does not mean that they can make any family decisions.

When Makrita is late Atangana complains:

'Will that woman ever understand that she must always come back to the village well before midday?'

And his brother, Ondua ironically responds:

'Atangana! Don't talk about that! It's only what I always say: women will have their way! No sensible man should waste his time trying to reason with them!...

Their father, Abessolo, adds his wisely given piece of advice:

...Do you think I'd have stood for such nonsense?...I tell you again, you must beat your wives! Yes, beat them! And treat your daughters just the same way! (p.12)

The women are the ones working to the field, as evidenced on the occasion Makrita tries to convince Juliette to get married. One of the reasons she gives is that Juliette's dowry would be used to pay her brother's dowry and that the in-law would then come and help Makrita with the farming.

The women are portrayed as **relatively voiceless**, and do not participate in the decision making of family affairs, or even in decisions about their own lives. Juliette is not given any say in her choice of marriage partner. When she raises her voice to

give her opinion she shocks everybody, especially old Abessolo, her grandfather. He says:

Your opinion? She wants to be asked her opinion!
Since when do women speak in Mvoutessi? Who teaches you girls of today such disgraceful behaviour?... (p.15)

Even women themselves are accustomed to that culture of silence. This is the common experience of many girls, especially in rural African societies. The only difference is that Juliette dares to speak out openly and express her feelings and frustrations, whilst other women seek a safer option in silence. They are surprised when Juliette finds the courage to talk to her father and relatives and gives her opinion. The grandparents, in particular, feel the need to defend their tradition and see it as their moral duty to teach the new generation of girls how to behave.

The **bride price** is a very important aspect of African tradition. Suitors pay to their in-laws a token of some animals - cows, goats, and sheep – as well as sums of money, or other items like clothes. But for many parents the whole process has turned into a business deal where parents and relatives are no longer interested in their daughters' futures; rather, they insist on a bride price for their subsistence. In the play, the parents arrange the marriage and choose a suitor for Juliette, which proves more profitable to them than it does for Juliette. Mbia is already married to eight women and he wishes to make Juliette his ninth wife. This fact does not bother anyone except Juliette herself, who, of course, is in love with Oko. But her marriage is not expected to be a personal issue; it should benefit her immediate family, together with the extended family members. Thus, the most important husband is the one who is wealthy, who will in return pay lots to his in-laws, and that is what matters most; love does not really matter; in this case, relatives should come first, as Bella, Juliette's grandmother confirms:

You must be out of your mind, Juliette! Since when do girls fall in love without the permission of their families! How can you disappoint us all like that?...I tell you again, my child, you must marry a great man! It's about time you too began bringing us food, drinks...It's about time we too became respectable people! (p.39)

Apart from such direct beneficial income from the marriage of a girl, as quoted above, the bride price of a sister would also be used to wed her brother, which is why it is crucial to obtain a wealthy suitor. In this play such a point is given much emphasis, as observed here by Juliette's mother:

Well, I said to your brother: Don't worry about the bride-price you are asked to pay for your future wife! Your sister Juliette is attractive and she's been to secondary school! We'll be rich when some great man comes to marry her...(p.38)

Moreover, during the conversation between Atangana, Mezoe and Mbarga, on how to pay back the stolen money, all the suggestions centre on Juliette; no other alternatives are offered:

You must take Juliette to Yaounde; a girl like her will certainly attract other suitors in the city! Call at all Government offices, and try to get rid of your daughter! If someone agrees to pay you three hundred thousand francs, you give him Juliette right away...Besides, if you have an attractive daughter, you can do anything these days! (pp 60,61).

Juliette's cousin, Matalina, comes forward with a brilliant idea, different from her father's one. She suggests that Juliette should go to the city and seek a good job in a government office, although she concludes in the same stereotypical reasoning that 'everybody says it's not at all difficult for attractive girls' (p.40). Matalina does not think of the possibility of Juliette securing a job on her own merits, but rather because she is an attractive girl.

The text points to the changes brought by the **education of women**. The main protagonists argue that education is to blame for Juliette's misbehaviour. Education is thought to have corrupted her mind and that is why the other men like Ondua and Mezoe vow never to take their own daughters to school:

'...Me, send a daughter of mine to secondary school? Never! She'll stay at home and grow peanuts like my wife Monica! And some day, she'll attract us a wealthy suitor who'll bring me lots of strong drinks!' said Ondua.

'You were right, ah Ondua. Girls should never be sent to school! Take Juliette, for instance: what did she do when we told her to love the civil servant? Did she even listen to us?' asked Mezoe (p.60).

This mindset is passed down from Abessolo's generation to Atangana's generation so that now we see the men of Juliette's generation arguing in the same way. According to Ndi, he is relieved not to have to marry Juliette as he would rather have a less educated wife who would be more submissive than an educated one like Juliette. And it is very likely that this attitude will be passed on to future generations if it is not challenged. Such attitudes may have come from half a century ago, but to a great extent, the description of those beliefs within these texts still offers a genuine insight into many African values, especially of those values that are held dear among traditional Africans living in rural areas where life is not yet modernised.

Otherwise this is a comic play with a happy ending. This is significant to gender portrayal since the main character is a strong and intelligent girl who outwits everyone and gets what she wants. It is a lesson for other girls that they can stick to what they want and succeed in life, thus the text has emancipatory aims. One point however deserves a mention here: namely, that Juliette, who succeeded in marrying the man of her choice, does not do so by presenting strong arguments to make her parents and relatives understand her feelings. Rather, she uses deception and theft in order to be heard and granted her rights. As an educational text, this play might be used to stimulate debate about whether women need to tell lies or steal in order to get what they deserve.

The Lion and the Jewel (Soyinka, 1963)

Male and female views on tradition and education

Just like *Three Suitors*, *One Husband*, Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* places marriage at the heart of the play in order to debate, among other themes, the issue of the bride price, which is vital in African culture. The play is about a girl called Sidi who insists that a bride price should be paid in order to wed the village teacher, Lakunle. However, Lakunle is seeking to change this tradition by vowing to marry Sidi without a single coin being exchanged. A complication appears in the shape of the village chief who also vies for her attention. Despite being old and having many wives and concubines, chief Baroka wants to marry Sidi simply because she is a

virgin and, after all, he has a powerful position in the village. He symbolises the lion and the law of the jungle: 'Survival of the Fittest'. He sends his eldest wife, Sadiku, to ask Sidi for her hand in marriage. However, Sidi initially refuses both men because she has become a village beauty and has high dreams of a future modelling career. Surprisingly, it is old Baroka, the chief, who succeeds in marrying Sidi, which shocks everyone, including Sidi herself. Prior to this he uses a trick – he pretends to be impotent; Sidi is trapped and becomes an easy prey for the old man. Sidi marries him simply because she has lost her virginity and has no other choice.

Unlike Juliette in *Three Suitors, One Husband*, who is against the bride price, Sidi in the *Lion and The Jewel* insists on the pricing as she talks with Lakunle (p.7):

I've told you, and I say it again
I shall marry you today, next week, or any day you name.
But my bride-price must first be paid...Lakunle, I must have
The full bride-price.

But Lakunle, who is determined to make use of his education to change the bride pricing tradition, responds impatiently that the custom is outdated. However, Sidi is just trying to comply with the custom of the village:

Will you make me
A laughing-stock? Well, do as you please.
But Sidi will not make herself
A cheap bowl for the village spit...
They will say I was no virgin
That I was forced to sell my shame
And marry you without a price. (p.7)

Lakunle feels that he has to demonstrate his professional obligation to teach society. He claims he would start to do this by giving Sidi some lessons; and here he defines what marriage means and why bride pricing is not necessary:

Oh Sidi, I want to wed, because I love,
I seek a life-companion... An equal partner in my race of life...
Ignorant girl, can you not understand?
To pay the price would be
To buy a heifer off the market stall.
You'd be my chattel, my mere property. No, Sidi! (p.8)

Unfortunately, Sidi is deep rooted to the tradition and does not change her mind about the bride price, despite Lakunle's promptings. Her insistence over the bride

price greatly upsets Lakunle. One can note here that, unlike in *Three Suitors*, *One Husband* where the girl Juliette seeks to break with tradition, in *The Lion and the Jewel* it is another girl, Sidi, who is the traditionalist, whilst the man is the one breaking with tradition. The question, therefore, is not about which gender supports African traditions, or which is being attracted by change, but rather it depends on the individuals concerned.

Despite the fact that Lakunle preaches 'equality' it should be remembered that this is the same teacher who earlier had informed Sidi: 'For as a woman, you have a smaller brain than mine.' And when Sidi is irritated by this he elaborates (p.4):

Please, don't be angry with me. I didn't mean you in particular.
And anyway, it isn't what I say. The scientists have proven it. It's in my books.
Women have a smaller brain than men, that's why they are called the weaker sex.

This is what women are taught to believe; given this statement, even mothers would feel inferior in front of their sons, especially those who had received some formal education. Further, the fact that Soyinka allowed chief Baroka to marry Sidi at the end of the play, and to do so by using an underhand trick, suggests that the playwright did indeed disapprove of such traditions which still exist. For years, Sadiku, as the eldest wife of the chief, was humiliated for being used as the go-between in bringing the chief more women and concubines. Now, when Sadiku tells Sidi that chief Abessolo is impotent – which means he will stop exploiting her for sexual purposes – they both celebrate (p.33):

Sadiku: Oh it is you my daughter. You should have chosen a better time to scare me to death.

The hour of victory is not time for any woman to die.

Sidi: Why? What battle have you won?

Sadiku: Not me alone girl. You too. Every woman. Oh my daughter, that I have lived to see this day...To see him fizzle with the drabest puff of misprimed 'sakabula'...

Ask no questions my girl. Just join my victory dance...

Sidi: O-ho-o-o-o-!...

Some hope indeed. Oh Sadiku

I suddenly am glad to be a woman

We won! We won! Hurray for womankind!

Sadiku was not merely celebrating the impotence of Baroka, but rather his oppression over his household and in the village at large. Evidently, Sadiku had been uncomfortable when employed in bringing her husband his new wives. She was just a servant set apart to take orders from her master, no matter what these were. He was the chief and thus legitimised himself to take any woman he wanted. Some of these women, such as Sidi, were like his own daughters and he certainly did not mind having them as his wives or concubines. However, such scenarios in the texts are a good opportunity for teachers to stimulate a discussion about whether or not it was okay for Sidi to marry the old man under such circumstances.

The playwright is also adept at demonstrating how difficult the whole movement of liberating women in Africa really is. Apart from the hindrances from people in power like chief Baroka, women themselves face yet another barrier. In the play, Sadiku and Sidi are so naive that they fail to spot the plot against Sidi. Sadiku did not have the time to ponder the truth or otherwise of the trick set by her husband. She is told he is impotent and she runs to tell Sidi what had befallen the chief. On the contrary, it is Lakunle who worries excessively about the whole situation. Sidi, however, does not take any precautions; she runs to the chief's house and carelessly goes straight to Baroka's bedroom, where her betrayal soon becomes evident. When she comes out of the room she sobs bitterly and hence gives her own approval to the marriage, despite the fact that she was not in love with Baroka. The author reveals how sad it is to see the young lady, once so firm in her stand not to marry the old man because of his many wives, now trapped in a loveless marriage. Instead, she tries to justify her defeat by mocking Lekunle, who was ready to marry her in spite of what had happened (p.63):

Why, did you think that after him,
I could endure the touch of another man?
I who have felt the strength
The perpetual youthful zest
Of the panther of the trees?
And would I choose a watered-down,
A beardless version of unripened man?...

She continues:

Out of my way, book-nourished shrimp.
Do you see what strength he has given me?
That was not bad. For a man of sixty,
It was the secret of God's own draught
A deed for drums and ballads.
But you, at sixty, you'll be ten years dead!
In fact, you'll not survive your honeymoon...
Come to my wedding if you will.' (pp. 63, 64).

The play ends as Sidi goes to marry Baroka. In addition, the author suggests that there should also be classes for educating people like Sadiku, as Lakunle remarks (p.37):

This is my plan, you withered face
And I shall start by teaching you.
From now you shall attend my school
And take your place with twelve-year olds.
For though you're nearly seventy,
Your mind is simple and unformed.
Have you no shame that at your age,
You neither read nor write nor think?
You spend your days as senior wife, collecting brides for Baroka...

This is yet another opportunity for a classroom discussion on the importance of education. Tradition and marriage are also important themes in the next text, *Song of Lawino and Ocol*.

***Song of Lawino and Ocol* (P' Bitek, 1966)**

Song of Lawino is a dramatic monologue of Lawino attacking her husband, Ocol, for being against African traditional ways and customs. In the same text, *Song of Ocol* is Ocol's response to Lawino's claims. The extended poem is therefore a dialogue between husband and wife. It is set in northern Uganda in the Acoli tribe, where we see the couple in a conflict of cultures. Whereas Ocol has received a Western education and adopted the Western culture, his wife, Lawino, does not have any formal education and clings to the Acoli culture. *Song of Lawino* has been praised by many African critics as a genuine African work which depicts the true African culture. While Ocol insults Lawino and looks down on her traditional ways, she reacts by teaching Ocol about the beauty of her culture, and at the same time attacks him by mocking his adopted Western ways. According to Heron (1972), in his

introduction to *Song of Lawino and Ocol*, Lawino takes the debate further than those African critics who spent much time in defending the African culture – from proudly presenting it ‘without apology’ to ultimately ‘attacking’ the Western ways.

p’Bitek uses two extremely static characters, Lawino and Ocol, to discuss issues pertaining to the fact that what may be considered normal and moral in Africa, might be considered abnormal and immoral in another part of the world. It is a matter of different cultures. While Lawino does not seem to be ready to learn anything new or different from her own culture, Ocol seems set to completely forsake the African culture of his origin and embrace the foreign ones, and hence Lawino brands him as ‘behaving like a hen that eats its own eggs’ (p.35). Lawino confesses to the fact that she is ignorant of other people’s cultures and determines to close possible doors to learning, whilst Ocol makes a final decision to never go back to where he comes from – there is no compromise for either of them; each character, therefore, adopts only an extreme view:

Like beggars
You take up white men’s adornments
Like slaves or war captives
You take up white men’s ways...
Didn’t Black People have their ways?
Like drunken men
You stagger to white men’s games...and amusements...
Didn’t your people have amusements?...
As if you have no dances;
As if you have no instruments! (pp.49, 50)

I do not know, how to cook
Like white women; I do not enjoy
White men’s food, and how they eat...
And why should I know it? (p.62)
If you enjoy them, go ahead!
Shall we just agree, to have freedom
To eat what one likes? (p.63)

Song of Ocol’s first paragraph opens with Ocol addressing Lawino and her song. As soon as it is his turn he responds in this way:

Woman, Shut up!
Pack your things, Go!
Song of the woman, is the confused noise
Made by the ram, after the butcher’s knife

Has sunk past, the wind pipe...
It is a song all alone, a solo fragment
With no chorus, no accompaniment
A strange melody, impossible to orchestrate (p.121)

And when he is done with Lawino, he turns to criticise what she stands for, not seeming to care whether Lawino listens to him or not.

What is Africa to me? Blackness
Deep, deep fathomless, Darkness...
To hell with your Pumpkins, and your Old Homesteads
To hell with the husks, of old traditions
And meaningless customs...
Mother, mother
Why was I born black? (pp.125, 126)

The poet uses one of these two characters as his mouthpiece.

The female traditionalist

Learned traditional ways

The poet's major emphasis is on African culture. He uses Lawino to insist that 'the pumpkin in the old homestead must not be uprooted', meaning that no one should ever abandon their own culture. Lawino is ignorant of foreign ways and knows nothing about Christianity since she has no interest in such things. But she is, in fact, knowledgeable of African traditional ways. That is what an African woman is expected to know. She constantly tells us how her mother taught her almost everything. This subject was discussed in *Things Fall Apart* and *The Great Ponds* where mothers were expected to teach their female children to be a good wife and mother, and how to take care of the family, especially in kitchen issues. Lawino also knows lots about traditional medicines:

My mother showed me many medicines,
Medicines for leprosy and yaws,
For difficult childbirth and barrenness
For men whose spears refuse to stand up...
For snake bites, for milkless breasts...
When my child is ill, I try the medicines
My mother showed me (p.96)

And she goes on to tell of various medicines for different diseases, such as *bomo* for stomach aches, roots of *omwombye* for bad throats, *akeyo* for eyes, *lapena* and *olim* for coughs and sore throats, and *ogali* or *pobo* for broken skin. Should all of these fail then she would consult a medicine woman and perform sacrifices to African ancestors; and if this also failed then it would mean that someone must be behind the sickness: a witch, for example. However, Lawino's belief in supernatural powers comes above all the traditional medicines, healers, witches and ancestors. This is the power which causes death. She confesses:

The sick gets cured because his time has not yet come:
But when the day dawned
For the journey to Pagak
No one can stop you
White man's medicines, Acoli medicines
White diviner priests, Acoli herbalists
All medicine men and women
Are good, brilliant, when the day has not yet dawned. (pp. 101-3)

Further, Lawino does not need any teaching about time telling and seasons, for she already knows the traditional answers: 'When the cock crows for the first time it is five' or 'When the sun is sweet to bask in it is eight o'clock'; and it is the same with the seasons :

I know that Okang
My first born
Was born at the beginning
Of the Dry Season
And my little girl
In the middle of the rains (p.64)

Posing some critical questions

It is through Lawino's naivety that the poet defends the African culture and criticises the foreigners' ways. Other writers might choose a drunken person, or a child, or an uneducated person, as in this case, to present very strong points because these kinds of people are not expected to have good judgement, but at the same time the message intended by the writer is clearly understood. Lawino quizzes the priests, padres, nuns and teachers with critical questions about their faith, to which she receives no answer. She asks vital questions about the Creation, the riddle of the birth of Jesus by a virgin mother, about baptism, and the sacraments, and about the meanings of

Christian names. All of these questions are perfectly legitimate; Christians themselves sometimes ask them. She also asks about politics; why the Democratic and Congress Parties should not unite to bring about change in society since both parties preach 'unity' and 'uhuru' (freedom). Ironically, she is given an example of the two brothers, Ocol and his brother, who have become enemies because they belong to two different political parties; she wonders how they are going to unite the whole of Uganda if even the two brothers have failed to unite. When Ocol is asked the same question he goes on the defensive in order to divert the question. Lawino's suggestion about unity is sensible and here she shows signs of thinking and questioning that would be typical of a more educated person - like the writer himself.

Knowing her place as an African woman

Lawino's problem is not about her role in society as a woman, but rather that she worries too much about her husband's 'downfall'. She knows lots about traditions like inheriting another's wife along with their properties, and she seems not to be too disturbed by this:

But I know, that if Ocol dies
His mother's son, whom he hates so much
Will inherit all Ocol's properties,
The goats, the chickens and the bicycles,
And I will become his wife. (p.106)

She also articulates the importance of children in African marriage:

The woman who struts, and dances proudly
That is the mother of many that is the fortunate one...
What is marriage, without child birth? (pp. 68, 94)

The poet also advises children to respect their parents as he reminds them of the troubles their parents endured during the children's upbringing:

No one wrestles with his father
No one looks down on his mother
You cannot abuse your mother!
Because it is that woman
Who hewed you out of the rock
And moulded your head and body...
Think of the fire
That burnt her fingers when she cooked for you...
You sucked those wrinkled breasts

And that's what made you
The big man you are! (p.99).

A description of the good job mothers do is also shown in *Is It Possible?* as Lerionka enjoys a joke with her mother:

Lerionka: Ah, mother, today you thought of washing calabashes.
Mother: Listen to that small mouse. Does it mean you have never seen me washing them?
Lerionka: No, I have never seen you washing them. That's why your milk stinks.
Mother: That stinking milk has made you stout, hasn't it? (p. 43).

As in the previous texts, the beating of wives is also depicted in *Song of Lawino*:

A lazy wife is beaten
A lazy man is laughed at. (p.69)

Since the traditional African societies were mainly hunters and farmers, gender roles were easily divided. This theme has also been discussed:

When the sun has cooled off, the men and youths
Visit the traps and pits, they hunt edible rats
Or hook fish from the streams...
The young boys, who tend the goats
Take turns to make the outdoor fire. (p.66)

While the above roles were performed by men, women were confined to the kitchen where they were preoccupied with preparing meals to feed family members and especially to please their husbands. Lawino admits that 'The competition for a man's love is fought at the cooking place' whilst 'A man's manliness is seen in the arena' (pp.41, 43). And because of the polygamous nature of African families, Lawino argues that women need not feel jealous of each other but instead should learn to compete to win the man's love. She was not bothered at all by her co-wife Clementine coming between her husband and herself; she just explains her technique:

You win him with a hot bath
And sour porridge
The wife who brings her meal first
Whose food is good to eat
Whose dish is hot...
And whose eyes are dark...
Such is the woman who becomes

The head dress keeper. (p.41).

Futher, Lawino reveals something in common with other African societies, as discussed in *Three Suitors, One Husband* - the issue of the dowry, which the poet here refers to as bridewealth. As in *Three Suitors, One Husband* where the issue of the bride price was discussed in depth, the poet confirms that in Africa it is common to have the girls' prices used to pay off their brothers' dowry (p. 71):

Youths in small groups, go on the apet hunting...
Others go off to Pajule, to look for bridewealth
For if you have no sister, then kill an elephant
You sell the teeth, and marry a wife
Then you call your son Ocan, because you are poor!

Resisting change

Lawino recalls with a sense of nostalgia how her man used to be a 'real man' before he turned out to be a 'woman' [a 'woman' for Lawino means being weak and inferior, as when Ocol rejects his traditions by following other people's cultures]. In her case, she would not wish to learn anything new or different, and will thus remain a static character to the end of the poem. However, she is optimistic that Ocol would 'recover' someday:

When my husband, was still wooing me
His eyes were still alive, his ears were still unblocked
Ocol had not yet become a fool, my friend was a man then!
He had not yet become a woman, he was still a free man...
My husband was still a Black man...(p.113)

But Ocol my husband, if you are not yet utterly dead...
If some blood is still flowing
However faintly, take courage...
Drink some fish soup; slowly, slowly
You will recover...When you have recovered properly
Go to your old mother, and ask forgiveness from her (pp.117, 120)

However, no matter how strong the character of Lawino is, it is contradictory of her to refer to Ocol as a woman, simply because he had neglected his own culture.

The male champion of change

Ocol is a proponent of Western ways. His final words are ‘forward ever backward never’; he would never go back to where he comes from. And this really does not matter to the poet as he has said all he wanted to say to his audience through his spokesperson, Lawino. Ocol’s song is actually shorter than Lawino’s, but it affirms the character of Ocol, as told by Lawino: he is rude, arrogant and abusive. As Ocol campaigns for a political position and promises the following, the poet drives his point home with clinical irony:

We shall build, a new city on the hill...
We will erect monuments, to the founders of modern Africa;
Leopold II of Belgium, Bismarck...
Streets will be named, after great discoverers
David Livingstone
Henry Stanley, Speke...
We will not forget, Karl Peters... (pp.150,151)

This is an irony because of all the people Lawino would not want to hear about, those mentioned above would be the first. After all, she stands for African people and their culture, as the poet makes clear.

However, Ocol does raise some serious points, such as the importance of technology - points that Lawino would not have considered because of her naivety. As an educated African man he raises the issue of the dowry in the same way as the teacher, Lakunle, did in *The Lion and the Jewel* :

They buy you with two pots of beer
The Luo trade you for seven cows...
They purchase you, on hire purchase even like bicycles... (p.135)

He also raises important questions about traditions such as female genital mutilation, superstition (p.137), prostitution and ignorance (p.141). The poet has undoubtedly succeeded in using both the main characters to voice different, but important, issues.

Faraja's *Development* (1980)

Mabala's *Summons* is a collection of many poems written by different Tanzanian poets, published in 1980 in Dar es Salaam by Tanzania Publishing House. It includes

Development by Kundi Faraja (1980:30-33). Although gender representation is a minor theme in this poem, it will be discussed briefly here because it was the one I observed in class.

Underdevelopment

Although the poem is titled ‘development’, one of its main themes is underdevelopment. There are different contending opinions on the issue of underdevelopment, depending on what one considers ‘development’ to be since the term itself is relative. There are some who take the view that colonialism as a system was responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa and thus it is also responsible for the major economical problems facing the continent (see, for example, Rodney, 1973 in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*). After independence (*Uhuru* in Kiswahili) in many African countries, civilians had high expectations of their new governments which were to be run by themselves or by their own people. To their dismay, colonial exploitation and oppression were just transformed into other forms of betrayal, selfishness, irresponsibility and rampant corruption. For the poet, fighting the underdevelopment that is brought about by fellow Tanzanians, a minority of whom are in power for their own prosperity, is even ‘tougher than combating colonialism’ (stanza 5).

The fourth stanza in this poem, which begins with: *I declare running, better than walking, for a young and poor country...* reminds us of Julius Nyerere’s ideology of Self Reliance or ‘self-help’ as termed by Jennings (2003). Julius Nyerere is the late father of the nation of Tanzania. He propounded the ideology in the Arusha Declaration, insisting on the *Ujamaa*, the Tanzanian version of socialism, which means ‘brotherhood’ or ‘familyhood’ as explained by Nyerere (1968), which was vital to the country’s development. ‘We must run while others walk,’ asserted President Nyerere, referring to the grassroots development strategy to be applied if the country genuinely wanted to bring about socio-economical and political change. Such change was necessary if the country were to catch up with the rest of the world. Nyerere was against dependency of any sort.

The persona argues that society has obvious social classes, of whom a minority are well provided for, while the majority continue to suffer from extreme poverty. The poet maintains the view that it is now the Tanzanian leaders' turn to deliberately exploit their own country after taking over from the previous colonial regimes.

In general, the poem provides powerful evidence of just how severely the underdevelopment of a country can be manifested by internal factors, whilst those in control of the country are in the driving seat. The intermingling of personal wishes to accumulate wealth and the scramble for political power for selfish ends is what destroys the country. The leaders' offices are not for serving the masses as such; rather, they get to sit on thrones to exercise their power selfishly.

Tackling political corruption in Tanzania

Tackling political corruption in Tanzania is another theme in the poem. The poem represents the outcry of the majority of Tanzanians who are caught up in abject poverty. The tone of the poem is satirical. The persona's voice is ironic and possesses a mixture of anger and despair. The poet is wondering how 'development' will be brought about by leaders who are corrupt and act so irresponsibly in their own high offices. Using metaphorical language the poet is trying to reveal and shame those particular types of leader the country has. Ironically, these leaders are called Men of the People. The persona argues that it is impossible to develop and progress when the nation has such obstacles to overcome. It is leaders like these 'to whom they were entrusted power' who are, in fact, the major stumbling blocks to development. Those who are most affected by corruption are usually the weakest groups in society, the poorer women and children.

Given the apparent desire for change amongst the Tanzanian people, a desire for change to the whole political system, for freedom from corruption, and for the hopes of people for basic human rights and justice, one can understand how Kundi Faraja's poem speaks so clearly to many ordinary Tanzanian people today.

The treatment of gender

Although there is no direct relation between the classes of the minority versus majority as discussed in the poem, and gender, there is considerable evidence for suggesting that the persona speaks from a male's point of view, as shown in the first stanza. State leaders such as Presidents and political leaders such as Party Chairs are well identified as men, and emphasized by the use of the generic and possessive pronouns 'he' and 'his', and the use of the word 'brother' (to imply everybody). In this line of arguing the subordinate class may well be identified as consisting predominantly of women.

To describe the outcry of the majority as an impact of underdevelopment brought forth by the leaders' corruption and irresponsibility, the persona compares the cry of women as opposed to that of men:

More painful than the yell
Of a woman
As her husband dies of sickness;
It's more painful than the screams
Of a man
Dying in agony
In the coils of the greatest python
Found in the African forest

A woman is crying from home or hospital where she had been nursing her dying husband, whilst the man screams after being bitten by a snake somewhere out in the forest, albeit hunting. Teachers may use this opportunity to discuss gender roles.

The final text to be discussed here is not only the most recent text observed, but also set in a predominantly urban setting.

Passed like a Shadow (Mapalala, 2006)

Set in Uganda (except for the prologue page which is set in Tanzania), *Passed like a Shadow* is a short story which addresses the plague of HIV/AIDS in the country and beyond. While women such as Amoti and Vicky are the most victimized characters throughout the story, people in general are very ignorant about the disease and hence

they spread it widely and die in large numbers. It is a tragic tale relevant to all societies, as represented by the main character, Adyeri, an ex-headmaster who dies along with other members of his family. Only one family member, a young girl, survives the fate of the others by the narrowest of margins and by luck. It is a female character that survives the plague, which gives some significance to the text's message.

The fact that this story is set in Uganda changes nothing. Although all the other texts in this chapter are about the country of the writers, the context and content of *Passed like a Shadow* concerns the whole region of East Africa, which includes Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. The following section discusses the theme in *Passed Like a Shadow*.

The HIV/AIDS Plague

The overriding theme of this story is about the pandemic disease AIDS which wipes out families like that of Adyeri, the main character. His failure in life is summarised in the song which was sung by students at Kinyamasika Primary School, where the already sick Adyeri was among the invited guests, and hence the title of the novel:

What have I done in this world?
What memories shall I leave when I'm gone?...
Many people who die in anonymity
They die anonymity because the glorious things they did were eating,
drinking and sleeping
Then they crown their glory with death, a deed which is not hard even for the
young on a breast
That is having passed on this earth like a shadow (p.22).

The narrator then outlines the causes of its spread as follows.

Promiscuous sexual behaviour

Adyeri, the main character is obviously drawn not as a role model to be emulated by the society's youngsters, but as a character exemplifying the negative features of sexual practices associated with traditional African culture which promotes the spread of HIV/AIDS. His own family becomes a victim of his promiscuous sexual behaviour and they unfortunately follow his fate. While still working as a

Headmaster at St. Leo's High School, he establishes an affair with his secretary called Birungi despite warning from the church community which owns the school. His relationship with Birungi obviously destroys his reputation and when he misuses the institution's funds to maintain his mistress, the Bishop who is the head of the church takes him no more; he is expelled from his post. An expulsion from his prestigious post does not teach him a lesson; instead he gets confused, he becomes an alcoholic and indulges himself in a string of affairs with women in the streets despite being a married man. These include 'toothless' [old] women as the book says:

He had become some sort of a maniac and was picking women at random whenever he was drunk. One night he was found in a very embarrassing situation with a toothless woman whom he had been drinking with. On top of that he had Birungi and Amoti (p.24).

As a result of having many sexual partners, he acquires HIV and dies from AIDS, his innocent wife follows him and everyone involved with him sexually. The author warns against this kind of behaviour as he lets one of the men at Adyeri's funeral make this comment about what killed him: 'It was his love for ladies which killed him' (p. 39), a comment which prompts another comment from another man among the mourners:

'This disease will kill us all. Are we going to survive? And the ladies are becoming more and more attractive' (p.39).

Their comments show that Adyeri is not the only and the last man to die with AIDS, rather men have to resist the temptation of having many sexual partners since more beautiful women, as pointed out, will never end. Moreover, Adyeri's son, Atwoki did not learn from his father's mistakes. As he becomes rich and famous, he does not resist the temptation to women and he ends up becoming infected with HIV and dies as well in his tender age, as the author warns, 'like father, like son' (p.39). A similar example of promiscuous sexual behaviour among people is shown by David and his father in Kampala town. These two exchange women the same way as they exchange clothes. All the characters of this kind have a similar ending in this novel, dying from HIV/AIDS.

Mapalala clearly conveys the message that just a change of people's behaviour could save the families and the nation at large as observed in one of the characters' comments: 'We must change our behaviours for the better' (p.47). What happened to Adyeri's family is a tragic. The family perished except one girl. The nation as well loses the manpower like teacher Adyeri who was a trained teacher, secretary Birungi, and young people the kinds of Atwoki, David, Edda and Vicky who had the whole life ahead of them had it been not for the disease which cut short their lives.

Even the strongest of them, Abooki, Adyeri's daughter, falls prey to John's trap as she visits his house and carelessly takes a drink treated purposely to make her fall asleep. John rapes her, but fortunately she does not contract the deathly virus. The moral the writer draws from this story seems to indicate that girls should not be naïve but rather be more careful in their choice of boyfriends.

Prostitution

Many of the characters in *Passed Like A Shadow* are portrayed as prostitutes; these characters include Birungi, Vicky, Kunihiro, Tusiime and Edda. They are the ones who seduce men and make sure men fall prey into the traps they have laid. At the end of the story the majority of characters die from AIDS, leaving others to follow behind them. For instance, Birungi, formerly a personal secretary of Adyeri at St. Leo's High School, is described by the author as attracting Adyeri 'Through her feminine voice which sent fantasies and electric waves in Adyeri's heart...' (p.22), and 'her suggestive approaches' (23) Adyeri falls under her spell despite his efforts to defend himself. So in a way, the author shows us how powerful women are, especially so because these particular women are prostitutes and it is their job to 'capture' men. Unfortunately for Adyeri, it is this mistress who, we are told, infects him with HIV.

The author shows how poverty forces girls to engage in prostitution in order to maintain themselves in life as they do not have any choice than selling their bodies. A good example is Vicky, Adyeri's niece. She is being raised by Adyeri and his wife, Amoti, in their hostile home, alongside two cousins, Atwoki and Abooki. It is a

hostile home because the parents beat their children and the husband also beats his wife occasionally. Vicky is maltreated by her uncle and his wife. For example, she is punished for riding a bicycle in town, as 'It was not a good reputation for a lady to be seen riding a bike because it implied that she was easy going and indecent' (p.6). Vicky is deprived of her right to marry the man she loves simply because he fails to pay a bride-price, as insisted upon by Adyeri (p.10):

I'm the one who makes decisions. This is what I have decided: I don't care who marries Vicky, whether it's a person, a cow or a donkey. All I want is the dowry.

It can be argued that here the writer could not possibly accept Vicky's uncle's attitude blindly. Therefore, the writer presents such a scenario in order to imply criticism to traditional practices such as paying the dowry, which is a stumbling block to girls' free choice of their life partners, as shown by the case of Vicky who is denied the right to marry the man he loves just because he could not pay off the dowry. As noted earlier, dowry is one of the traditional practices which is still practised in East Africa. The author shows that Vicky is just another victim of such practices. Since Vicky does not have biological parents to take care of her and does not have any means of generating income, she is forced into prostitution. In the book she is described as a prostitute who was 'chased up by men the way flies chase rotting meat' (p.20).

Kunihira and Tusiime - Vicky's friends, are the ones who took her on the bicycle and also taught her about prostitution. After a long lecture, they succeeded in convincing her:

You are now a grown up girl and very marketable, do you have to entrust your life on your drunken uncle?...As for me, I shall sleep with any man to make money. Life is not easy...Even girls who are university graduates are doing it. Vicky, you can't be smarter than the rest of the people in the world (pp. 17-8).

From that point on, Vicky changed completely and followed her own inclinations. Later, she ends up marrying a polygamous man.

Another prostitute is Edda. Edda is the girl in the city of Kampala who succeeded in seducing Atwoki, the football star of Uganda, and the son of Adyeri. She is said to

have infected Atwoki. Further, the father of the family that hosted Atwoki when he visited Kampala is also reported to have been infected by their young house girl.

Generally, prostitution in this story is depicted as the only means of economic survival available to poor women despite its evident high risk. For instance, when Vicky married a rich man she calmed down and lived a decent life. This reflects the chronic economic conditions within the country where this story is set: these conditions affect women severely as they are forced by the severity of their situation to take the wrong path. Therefore the author sends to the society a strong message on how the economic situation affects women and the dire need for economic solution to the prostitution problem.

Ignorance and superstition

Mapalala portrays how the society is ignorant about the causal-effects of HIV/AIDS. The author is critiquing the African traditions of believing in superstition. For example, Amoti believes that her husband has been bewitched by Birungi his mistress despite people trying to explain about AIDS. Amoti is not alone, many people in her community believe the same that whoever dies of AIDS is bewitched, and this is yet another setback in fighting against its spread.

Also, when Vicky fails to conceive after ten years of her marriage to Aliganyira, in their quest for a baby the couple are treated by a traditional doctor who does not observe the hygienic medical precautions necessary to avoid the spread of HIV. For example, he uses the same surgical needles on all his clients, so that, eventually, Vicky ends up dying of AIDS. Such beliefs and practices still exist in Tanzania and Uganda to this day. Other risky practices such as female genital mutilation which expose girls and women to HIV infections also persist.

Generally, the author of *Passed Like a Shadow* depicts such problems, while indicating that most ordinary people are still very ignorant of the cause of diseases like cholera and HIV/AIDS; because of their ignorance they do not take any precautions; instead, they make themselves vulnerable to outbreaks and when, one

after another, people start to die, the belief in witchcraft starts to grow. However, the author challenges the current society in order to learn about the causal-effects of HIV/AIDS, instead of insinuating about beliefs in witchcraft. He also criticises the mentality that it is women alone who spread HIV and therefore it is they who deserve the blame for seducing men and leading them astray. Men are warned that they should not act as if they were the innocent ones.

The author also is critiquing the male's power as shown by Aliganyira. He is the one who takes Vicky to the witch doctor and when the witch doctor asks whether Vicky would like to have a baby girl or boy her husband quickly responds, 'A boy' 'though she would have preferred a baby girl' (p.37).

Moreover, using character called Jonathan, a HIV counsellor at the Public Health Office at Virika Hospital who conducted the HIV test for Abooki, the author has this to suggest to its audience:

We should go back to our positive African traditions where old-fashioned values like virginity and faithfulness were upheld by the society. I believe that any contradicting approach can only work in the short run, but it will only fuel the pandemic in the long run (p. 47).

This suggests a different understanding of traditional cultural practices, which, far from promoting promiscuity, emphasised monogamy.

Unstable families

Another issue Mapalala raises is that of families and their role in upbringing their children. He regrets that the young generation is brought up in the midst of troubled families like that of Adyeri. Atwoki and his sister Abooki and their cousin Vicky have never tasted childhood joy having seen their father and uncle respectively abuse their mothers each single day and themselves as well. Adyeri described himself as the master of his own family as observed:

He enjoyed knowing that his children feared him like hell. It gave him a sense of self satisfaction, a sense of royalty and aristocracy. He felt himself a complete master. This is the way he liked things to be, to bring up children the way himself had known since childhood. It was the stick-without-carrot method (p. 2).

And the author clearly disapproves this behaviour as he adds:

Little did he realise that they [children] needed his sincere affection more than his notorious outbursts (p. 2).

Because of the hostile home, Vicky became a prostitute. However, despite the hostile context, Atwoki grew up to be a very intelligent young man who also was a talented footballer. He excelled in football until he was a real star among his people in Uganda. He shot to fame as a teenager when he successfully represented his national team to win the African Cup. From his ability to shoot goals he was nick-named 'Fort Portal Bullet'. He built a modern house for his mother who was forsaken by his father. His fame and money brought him to his fate just like his father, leaving Abooki nursing three dying people in her family: her father, mother and brother plus grieving for her dying cousin Vicky.

The author portrays another unstable family of David. David and his father live a strange family where they do not show boundary between a parent and a son. In fact, David observes:

My father is very social. He is like a brother to me. And see how good he is at picking girls (p.33).

David's father encouraged the boys to visit luxurious hotels in town with him. He also encouraged them to pick any girls they liked while he provided them with transport. David and his father discouraged Atwoki from using condoms and watching Television programmes about HIV/AIDS calling them 'old fashioned' (p. 33).

Summaryand Conclusion

Chapter Four provided a textual analysis. It sought to address the research question of this study: *How is gender represented in literature in the English texts currently used in Tanzanian secondary schools?* The eight texts which were observed in classroom observations during fieldwork were discussed in this chapter. The texts range from novels of considerable length such as *Is It Possible?*, *The Great Ponds*, and *Things Fall Apart*; the plays *Three Suitors One Husband* and *The Lion and the*

Jewel; the epic *Song of Lawino and Ocol*; the short story *Passed Like a Shadow*; and a short poem, *Development*. The nature of the English language syllabus in Tanzanian secondary schools was outlined prior to the textual analysis.

It is clear from the brief reviews above that the authors of these texts vary in relation to their position with regard to gender relations. It must be remembered that writers and their works are inevitably a product of their time. Achebe, for example, writing in the late 1950s in a pre-feminist era is concerned with presenting rather than critiquing what he sees as central features of African culture. In this world, men are powerful and women are subservient, with violence used to cement traditional gender relations. Writing in a post-feminist era in 2006, Mapalala launches a strong critique of traditional gender relations in *Passed Like a Shadow*, which are the root cause of prostitution, male sexual promiscuity and the spread of HIV/AIDS. In all of the texts, there are ample opportunities for teachers to encourage pupils to engage in critical discussion of issues such as dowry system, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, prostitution and HIV/AIDS. However, these are difficult issues to handle in classroom discussion, requiring teachers themselves to engage critically with the texts. How the books are understood and presented is the topic of the following chapters.

A final point which needs to be noted is the absence of books by women, and more specifically by women writers who adopt a feminist standpoint, for example Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of *The Purple Hibiscus*, which provides a strong critique of violent and dysfunctional masculinity. This point is returned in the next chapter which presents interviews with policy makers who have been involved in the selection of school texts, and in the conclusion chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

POLICY MAKERS' AND TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT THE REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER IN THE CHOSEN TEXTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse policy makers' (officials) and teachers' views about gender representations in the literary texts used in Tanzanian secondary schools. Policy makers were asked about their role in the selection of texts and the extent to which gender issues informed the curriculum and their choice of books. Teachers were asked about the way in which their teaching was geared towards encouraging critical engagement with gender issues.

Four officials were involved in the interviews, all of whom were selected by virtue of their positions. The following table summarises the roles of these particular departments as revealed from the interviews.

Table 5.1: Summary of Officials' Roles

Inspectorate Office	Gender Desk	Educational Materials Approval Committee	Tanzania Institute of Education
Monitor policy implementation & ensure use of the syllabus	Train school inspectors, who will, in turn, train teachers on how to accommodate gender issues during the teaching process.	Set the evaluation and approval criteria	Design & develop the curricula & prepare guides for curriculum implementation
Supervise all activities of implementation of the curriculum in collaboration with the Education offices in the District, Municipal and Council headquarters.	Monitor gender issues at the Ministry & educate the Ministry of Education's community on gender	Receive and register educational materials submitted for approval	Prepare syllabi
Conduct observation of the teaching and learning process taking place in the classroom and thereafter to give advice where necessary to teachers on how to improve process & how to use the books	Advise the curriculum developers & ensure a gender-oriented curriculum	Evaluate the materials	Prepare educational materials and programmes for education at pre-primary, primary, secondary and teachers' colleges
Carry out evaluation of the curriculum	Monitor & ensure a gender friendly and/or responsive school in terms of pedagogy & infrastructure.	Approve or reject the materials	Collaborate with the Inspectorate office to organise & conduct seminars, workshops for subject teachers on how to use the improved/revised curriculum before its implementation
	Advise the Ministry officials on gender policy, implementation and evaluation	Publish and distribute the approved list to the schools and colleges	Collaborate with the Inspectorate office to carry out evaluations of the curriculum
	Publish flyers,booklets to educate Tanzanians about gender equality	Give advice concerning the education materials	

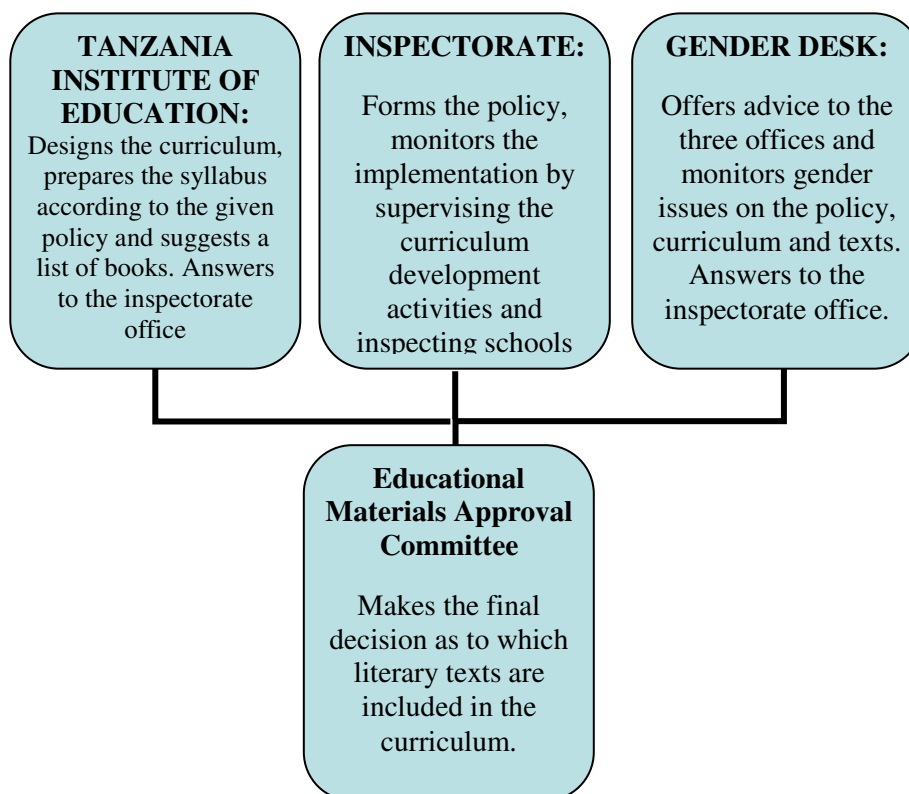
The overall roles of the Ministry of Education are outlined in the Education Circular Number 7 of 2005 as ‘Policy development, quality assurance, setting national standards, monitoring and evaluation’ (p.3). However, the Ministry contains a number of departments to carry out the implementation of its various roles, such as the four offices outlined in the above table. These co-working four offices are responsible to the Commissioner of Education - also known as The Chief Education Officer (Education Circular N0. 7, 2005), who is responsible to the Permanent Secretary. The Permanent Secretary is responsible to the Minister of Education.

With regard to the English language curriculum, it is the Inspectorate office which forms the teaching and learning policy. The Tanzanian Institute of Education sets the syllabus and designs the curriculum according to the policy and suggests suitable literary texts to be used at each level. The list is submitted to the Educational Materials Approval Committee which sets the evaluation and approval criteria of the texts. Educational Materials Approval Committee receives, registers and approves the materials submitted by publishing representatives. Educational Materials Approval Committee also publishes the approved texts and makes them available to schools through the Inspectorate office.

The main role of the Gender Desk is to advise the three offices of issues related to gender, for example, checking if the curriculum is gender aware; checking if the school environment and infrastructure are gender friendly; and advising Educational Materials Approval Committee on their selection of materials and activities.

Educational Materials Approval Committee takes the final decision as to what books are in the curriculum, while the Inspectorate office ensures the implementation of the curriculum in schools by inspecting schools and observing teachers in the classroom context. The following diagram summarises the way these four types of officials relate to each other in terms of hierarchy.

Figure 5.2: Hierarchy regarding education policy, curriculum and the literary texts



Officials' views of gender representation in the selected texts

Only two officials, from Tanzania Institute of Education (also called Curriculum Planner in this thesis) and the Inspectorate office, were able to recall some of the literary texts they had read in previous years, such as *The Lion and the Jewel* (Soyinka), *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe), *Petals of Blood*, *The River Between* and *Weep Not Child* (Ngugi wa Thiong'o), and *Song of Lawino and Ocol*. (P' Bitek). An official from the Gender Desk, one of the two officials who had not read any of the texts, could only describe them from second-hand knowledge passed on from colleagues, while the Educational Materials Approval Committee official was able to comment only on what he thought would be the impact of readings from these texts on students. By way of contrast, all teachers were able to describe the texts and give their views regarding aspects of gender as they deal with them on a regular basis in the classroom context.

After describing the way that women are portrayed negatively in most texts, one participant praised Wa Thiong'o, a male writer, for trying to balance gender portrayals in his writing, as compared to other writers:

Ngugi has these themes on traditions, religion, marriage and on politics...On other occasions we see some women portrayed as heroines but sometimes they are not; women are portrayed as weak. But I think Ngugi in a way values women more than other writers who portray women's weaknesses alone... (Female inspectorate official, 16/12/2008).

Other officials from the Tanzania Institute of Education and Gender Desk explained that reading about male and female power relations in texts even when men were clearly oppressing women, might be helpful for students if it helped them to understand and critique problematic aspects of Tanzanian society. The Tanzania Institute official argued that such gender portrayals are useful as they provide a platform for debate in the classroom, and sometimes they disclose the ways in which even men are oppressed, in terms of being denied the opportunity to do things, as these are often labelled according to gender roles. She described typical male behaviour in Tanzanian households:

They [men] are sometimes forced to do things or not to do them just because they are men....They are ready to eat and then leave the dirty plates on the table for flies to buzz around them only because the mother or someone is not around. The father cannot even make himself a cup of tea, he is scared of the kitchen's fire, or if he gets into the kitchen he is chased away, you know. You can see a lot of these things in these texts which can be used for discussions in classroom...(Female Tanzania Institute of Education official, 25/3/2009).

Although the Gender Desk official had not read any of the books, she had talked to friends about the book *Things Fall Apart*. She commented:

Texts reflect culture in a society. *Things Fall Apart*, for example, could have a positive impact on students as they could turn out to be gender activists if they hold critical discussions in classes and decide to overthrow the traditions like polygamy tradition, where they see even in reality how our leaders such as President Zuma [South Africa] and Chief Muswati [Swaziland] are wedding young girls every year! (Female Gender Desk official, 15/1/2009).

She went on to describe how gender representation are created and portrayed, and how these situations are played out in reality, and she gave specific examples from her own tribe on domestic violence and how unequally women are treated when men are brought to justice:

In our tribe, for instance, when a woman is beaten by her husband and the man loses the case in a trial, it would not be mentioned openly that the man is guilty. Rather, there is a pillar in the centre of the house and elders would say that the pillar has pleaded guilty, referring to the man, but if the woman lost the case they would mention her.... (Female Gender Desk official, 15/1/2009).

The gender official went further by showing how society has the traditional attitude that men are the breadwinners while women should be dependent on them, and that such attitudes have not changed, even amongst educated people:

Even the educated people still have the same mentality of seeing women as less important and not able to do things. For example, we had a meeting which was chaired by a female commissioner. Someone whispered to me, 'This woman is *'dume-jike'* [literal meaning: a woman who has male attributes]. She is a successful businesswoman and an entrepreneur'. You see, can't women flourish in life and remain women? [laughter] These texts depict the same reality which needs to be criticised... (Female Gender Desk official, 15/1/2009).

Officials' reason for incorporating the gender theme and account of the policy guiding the teaching of literature

According to the official in the Inspectorate office, the Education Training Policy of 1995 is one which guides the planning and developing of the curriculum for all subjects in secondary education, including the teaching–learning of literature. Participants revealed a number of major themes called Cross Cutting Issues that had been integrated throughout the secondary education curriculum. These are current issues word-wide such as Globalisation, Environment, Population, HIV/AIDS, Reproductive Health, Gender, and Family Life. The Cross Cutting Issues were incorporated into the curricula after the 2004 survey conducted by Tanzania Institute

of Education, which revealed the need to have the curricula reviewed and made relevant to contemporary issues and needs.

It was revealed that the gender theme was incorporated into the secondary curriculum as an aspect in various subjects to ensure an atmosphere of general gender sensitivity in schools. Another official from the Ministry of Education explained in the quoted remarks below how teachers of different subjects could become more aware of gender sensitive needs in the classroom context:

When teaching they [teachers] should not be biased by always pointing towards Tina, Maria and Joyce to answer questions, while John and Juma are also raising their hands, or vice versa...to avoid making either girls feel that they are not wanted in the class or boys feel the same. In Mathematics, if the teacher teaches numbers and says, 'There came two carpenters called John and Juma and they were joined by their cooks named Maria and Joyce, how many people in total?'...Now here there is no fairness; it is contrary to MDG 3. Or in books like literary texts, we find male protagonists only, and female minor characters (Female Gender desk official, 15/1/2009).

It was further elaborated that the inclusion of gender in literature was not only because of the Millennium Development Goals and through international conventions or organisations by which the country abides, such as The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but because it is also the nation's vision to see some cultural change in society. According to the policy makers, the Ministry of Education takes the issue of gender equality very seriously and strives to achieve it, whilst the Gender Desk was created to achieve that end. The official observed:

In a way, gender is included in the curriculum partly because of the Millennium Declaration, but, traditionally, women have been considered inferior and that culture hasn't changed completely. This stereotypical thinking is still there; that's why the government implements the Millennium Development Goals in order to promote gender equality. I wouldn't say we were gender sensitive before – no. And even now we haven't achieved it; it is taking shape though, slowly, but there's still a lot to be done (Female inspectorate official, 16/12/2008).

Asked about the possibility of achieving this gender goal, the official went on to express her fear that the country will neither achieve the goal, nor would this generation change the traditional ways which perpetuate gender inequality:

From the way things are, we are not going to be there by 2015, we are not going to achieve it by 2015....that is a dream. We have begun, though, we are going to be there sometime later, but we are not going to have full achievement either, no, no! I'm in the education system and I can talk about this, that we have a high number of dropouts, especially girls; a high number of girls who become pregnant or get married...What I am saying is that culture takes time to change. I inherited from my parents....my community believed in male dominance...Now I am married and it is not easy for me to suddenly behave as if I am liberating things...even our children will take part of our culture whilst embracing this new culture - where one can talk of equal opportunities in education but not full...not total equality (Female inspectorate official, 16/12/2008).

Although the above official from the Inspectorate office sounded pessimistic about promoting full gender equality, one can see that she was realistic about the time it takes for society to change, given the timeline set by the United Nations on achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015. She maintained that culture is a phenomenon that is deep rooted in people's belief systems, and therefore difficult to change.

The gender official, however, was optimistic and of the opinion that, to date, great strides have been made regarding equal opportunities through the enrolment of both boys and girls in schools, and added that the establishment of the Gender Desk at the Ministry of Education, and in other public offices, is a notable achievement.

Officials' account for the evaluation of the literary texts and the selecting process

The Educational Materials Approval Committee official who said he had not read any of the literary texts pondered the question as to how he could evaluate the gender aspect and approve the texts without having reading them himself. He replied:

In most cases, we normally approve what the Institute of Education has recommended because they [Curriculum Planners at the Institute of

Education] are the ones working closely in that area; they also work closely with teachers in their subject panels as they deal with specific texts... (Male Educational Materials Approval Committee official, 22/1/2009).

This official explained further that it is the School Inspectorate Office which works more closely with the teachers as they visit them in schools and have direct contact with teachers. However, he pointed out that Educational Materials Approval Committee do have an aspect of 'evaluation' of the materials, to make sure they conform to the general and specific goals of its education policy, although it is the Inspectorate Office which does the 'practical evaluation'. Asked about Educational Materials Approval Committee's 'aspect of evaluation' and their main duty, the official clarified that Educational Materials Approval Committee was there to ensure the general quality of education in Tanzania through the materials used. As part of their work he explained that they evaluate the texts to see if they conform to the set syllabus and their 'adherence to the socio, cultural values of Tanzania, integration of life skills and the Cross-Cutting Issues'.

With this response, different theories emerged about the criteria and procedures to be followed before the literary texts could be selected and approved for formal use in secondary schools. The Educational Materials Approval Committee official maintained that they consider firstly whether the goals of education in Tanzania are reflected in these texts. However, in the course of the interview, the official stated that the Curriculum Planners at the Institute of Education were responsible for putting together a list of suggested titles and submitting them to the Educational Materials Approval Committee for approval. The official added that they would normally approve what has been recommended by the Curriculum Planners since they are the ones working closely with teachers through subject panels, and that this would give them a good opportunity to understand their needs better than others in the Ministry. This claim was later to be confirmed by the Tanzania Institute of Education official when she talked about the problems in the process of selecting and approving the literary texts.

Another official from the Inspectorate office submitted:

We have a list of titles to be read; the list is provided by TIE [Tanzania Institute of Education] to subject panel members, so there is the 'English subject panel' which consists of members from the University of Dar es Salaam, TIE [Tanzania Institute of Education], the Inspectorate, secondary education, and even primary education...So these books are given to the panel members for evaluation...There is also another committee called EMAC (Education Materials Evaluation Committee)...Only EMAC [Education Materials Evaluation Committee] has to approve the education materials, especially text books or equipment. So there are two organs: EMAC, and the subject panel (Female inspectorate official, 16/12/2008).

When asked what happens if the two organs differ in opinion, for instance, if the subject panel approves the texts while Education Materials Approval Committee rejects them, the official maintained that 'in most cases if the subject panel approves the books they would not be rejected by Education Materials Approval Committee'.

The Tanzania Institute of Education official maintained that there was a problem in selecting procedures. She contended that many school are having different lists of the texts whereas some Form Four students are using the Form Five's list according to her informal research she did using her children and her neighbour's. She observed:

It is not clear who selects and approves the literary texts. For example, I asked my neighbour's child who is in Form Four to write me a list of literary texts they use in school and they brought a list for Form Five! I remarked, 'Are you sure these are the texts you use in your school?' They said 'Yes'. I summoned another one studying literature in Form Five and they brought me the old list, which bore a stamp of the Institute of Education. This is seriously wrong (Female TIE official, 25.3.2009).

When this official was asked whose mistake it was that had caused such confusion about the literary texts to be used in schools, she implicated the other Ministry officials in the error by contending that, at their office at Tanzania Institute of Education, the curriculum planners have an English language panel which recommends the literary texts and submits the list to the Commissioner of Education (who is the chair of the Education Materials Approval Committee). She explained that it is Education Materials Approval Committee's responsibility to evaluate those suggested texts and to approve or reject them, and through the Inspectorate Office to

distribute the approved list to schools and ensure that each school has the relevant list and texts. She added:

The list should bear the Ministry of Education's stamp, not the Institute's. When we enquire from the Ministry to send us the approved list they do not respond even by a letter. Then we send someone to get the feedback in person, but in vain; we are told that we shall get it...Now we make a follow-up in schools and through these students what we get is the same list we suggested. So this is the situation (Female Tanzania Institute of Education official, 25.3.2009).

Whilst focusing on these key actors, the policy makers findings reveal that while there appears to be well stated policies and clearly defined personnel role descriptions, the reality is different as there is some confusion about their roles at a practical level.

As we have seen in this chapter, each of the officials interviewed claimed the other office had the more significant role regarding the texts used. For example, the Education Materials Approval Committee was principally expected to have most of the answers concerning questions on criteria of book selection, according to their stated duties. On the contrary, however, it was the Tanzania Institute of Education officials who were constantly held responsible for most of the duties. Both officials from the Inspectorate and Education Materials Approval Committee confirmed that Tanzania Institute of Education suggested the texts, and most of these were approved. This suggests that, in practice, Tanzania Institute of Education does both the tasks of recommending and approving the texts. Moreover, the reshuffling of the texts in the curriculum was also thought to be Tanzania Institute of Education's duty.

In addition, findings reveal that although the protocols are well defined, they are hardly in place. For example, before commencing the interview with the Inspectorate official, who was the first to be interviewed, she gave me the currently in use list of literary texts for 2009-2011 (the list bears the Tanzania Institute of Education's stamp). What surprised me was that the official herself appeared to be going through the list as if it was the first time she had seen it. And she herself was surprised when

she realised that a particular book was not on the list: ‘Why *Things Fall Apart* is not on the list?’ She wondered. ‘It was not meant to be dropped,’ she confirmed.

The rest of the officials did not have the list and when I asked them about specific questions concerning the list, like the criteria for selecting those texts, they were surprised that I had the new list because they did not have one. So these officials asked me for my copy so that they could make a copy from it. This was really surprising as it is Education Materials Approval Committee’s responsibility to publish and distribute the relevant list to schools, but here were some of their representatives who did not even have a copy of the list for themselves.

As both officials at Gender Desk and the Education Materials Approval Committee admitted to not reading the texts, any final advice they might give on whether or not these texts meet particular educational goals must surely be suspect.

Now because of this situation, even the commitment of Educational Materials Approval Committee to stick to the set evaluation criteria of the literary texts could as well be in question. Because of this, one doubts whether or not the evaluation criteria shown above are followed and whether the process is carried out by the responsible personnel. Regarding this confusion of who does what, one possible explanation put forward by this study is that the obvious lines of demarcation that clearly identify officials’ roles are not practised. If they were, such errors might not occur.

Officials’ views of the teacher’s role and the feedback mechanism to monitor policy implementation

As noted earlier, all officials named teachers as being central to implementing the educational policies and in accommodating the Cross Cutting Issues in their teaching. When asked what they expected teachers to do with the texts on gender issues, the Education Materials Approval Committee official responded that they expect teachers to teach literature and deliver the subject matter according to the Tanzanian’ learners’ needs, such as being informed of national and international

issues like cultures, economics, politics and technologies. These needs are determined by the Ministry of Education.

When asked if the Ministry has set specific areas as a base for monitoring the implementation and evaluation of aspects of gender, the official replied that they 'do not go into the specifics of gender issues'; rather, they normally 'ensure that the gender aspect is there in the texts.' He added that:

We expect teachers and students to read and analyse the texts; we sometimes refer to this process as 'appreciating the texts'... analysing the gender and other issues emerging in the texts. In a sense, as they discuss the authors' messages they also give their own views' (Male Education Materials Approval Committee official, 22/1/2009).

From the above quote, one can see that teachers are expected to do a lot of work on these texts without being specifically guided to what should be done concerning gender issues.

Officials listed a number of ways that are used to monitor policy implementation and to ensure they acquire some feedback from the implementers, such as teachers. These include: the Ministry's feedback system; the Inspectorate Department that interacts with teachers during schools' visits; the curriculum planners who interact with teachers through seminars, workshops, and in their subject panels and stakeholders' forums.

However, curriculum planners maintained that they get most of their feedback, not from teachers, as other officials had suggested, but from the Ministry's own system which is the Inspectorate Office. The Inspectorate department is the only office that works in such close proximity to teachers as it visits and inspects schools, and talks to teachers in person and evaluates the teaching context.

However, a notable challenge was identified by all officials: namely, that these feedback mechanisms are not always very effective, as they require funds in order to conduct seminars or dialogues and workshops to acquire input from policy

implementers like teachers. With regard to teachers being central to the implementation, officials admitted that teachers would be required to be given in-service training (INSET) and orientation every time something new was added to the curriculum - such as the accommodation of the Cross Cutting Issues, including gender. Officials stated that:

...For those [teachers] like me who attended college a long time ago they need in-service training to build their capacity ...Which is why we have applied for funds but not succeeded yet (Female gender desk official, 15/1/2009).

We expect that they [teachers] get acquainted with gender issues right as they graduate from college; also, inductions through seminars and workshops, though these are not often conducted due to financial constraints (Male Education Materials Evaluation Committee official, 22/1/2009).

The constraints on funds hinder plans for orienting teachers. Primary school teachers at least had once attended such seminars on how to use the syllabus. We commenced this national operation through UNICEF sponsorship but we couldn't reach far as schools are so many, so we couldn't afford to conduct workshops for all teachers (Female Tanzania Institute of Education official, 25.3.2009).

The official from the Inspectorate pointed out that even if the Ministry could conduct seminars, the root cause of the problem was at the university where teachers are taught language and literature as different entities but when they get employed they are assigned to teach both language and literature as one subject. She suggested that changes should begin from there: those taking linguistics should be asked to study literature and vice versa. According to the official, this would eliminate the problem of having graduates who find themselves in a situation where they have to teach both subjects in secondary schools, although they may only have studied one at university. It can be argued that this really is a crucial point as it is a reality in the current educational system. Head Teachers in schools do not differentiate between a teacher of literature and a linguistics teacher; however, at university the two are quite different subjects.

All officials argued that whether the book is written gender critically or not, it is the teacher who must successfully employ the necessary teaching methods and skills to

make it interesting and useful. An example of this is given by the curriculum planner from Tanzania Institute of Education who offered an explanation as to why she thought the teachers were all-important:

Students read the texts in classrooms...At home many parents do not read what their children read in schools...(Female Tanzania Institute of Education official, 25/3/2009).

This participant went on to give an anecdote, which referred to a man and his two wives who were on a *daladala* [a commuter bus in Tanzania]: There was an argument about where they would get off. The women suggested that they get off at the next stop called *Mwananyamala*, but the man complained that they were dictating to him:

‘Aah, women nowadays have been given a chance to speak out! Now listen, I am not going to obey you’. And they did not get off at the suggested stop. So what do you expect from this sort of person? Can we expect change out of this mindset? Teachers contribute a lot to changes’ (Female Tanzania Institute of Education official, 25/3/2009).

Another participant had similar views about the influence of the texts, depending on the teaching methodology the teacher might apply:

It depends on the circumstances and how the teacher will treat the theme... how the teacher interprets whatever they are reading. For example, the question of religion, if you are not careful on how you guide them to interpret...they can develop conflicts, so the teacher should be careful, of course, by allowing the children to express themselves, but be sure to guide them (Female inspectorate official, 16/12/2008).

The Education Materials Evaluation Committee official added that the power and social relationships of the readers would not only be influenced by the teaching itself, but would also depend on the ‘relevance of the texts as related to learners’ needs and expectations, and also depend on individuals’ views’.

Although the Gender Desk official concurred with the other interviewees about the pivotal role of the teacher, she argued that the curriculum planners and Educational Materials Approval Committee also needed to consider those literary texts whose

authors had given an explanation of their aims in writing the book, either in the introduction, or in the blurb. In general, officials were of the opinion that authors wrote books which reflected society in order to criticise or suggest moral lessons to the readers, and therefore they laid this responsibility on to the teachers, whose role it is to uncover these lessons.

Teachers' views

There appeared to be two groups of teachers: one having what might be called a 'traditional' view of the gender representations in the literary texts, and the other group which had some more 'critical' views. On the one hand, **a traditional less critical group** consisted of one male (50+ years old, University candidate, in a mixed urban school) who was the oldest person among the participants and had been teaching literature for over twenty years, and a female teacher (20+ years old, Diploma in education, in a mixed rural school), who was the youngest of the group and has been teaching for two years. They adopted an uncritical reading of the texts, and assumed that authors wanted the readers to accept rather than critique the traditional gender identities which were depicted.

Drawing on examples from the play *Rwanda Magere* (Okot Omitah, 1991), the female teacher insisted that despite the imbalances in representing women in these texts, it was acceptable for women to voice their opinion via men because that is what is expected from women in reality. She agreed that many of the texts depicted men as dominant and women as submissive, but did not see this as problematic and clearly expected pupils to accept this as the natural order of things. For example, in the play *Rwanda Magere*, a woman is used to trap the central male character, Rwanda Magere, in marriage.

The young teacher explained that she accepted such examples of natural gender roles, and did not expect pupils to criticise such representations. She maintained:

Yes, we need some kind of gender balance yet we shouldn't change the way we are supposed to be. Women are mothers whilst men are fathers and this fact should remain intact. Gender awareness should not make women try to

take over all the roles. Or try to be better than men. Men should continue participating in their roles and so should women (Female teacher in School C, 12 Feb 2009).

From the above quote, this teacher seemed to be implying that, as mothers, women should not assume other roles, and in particular men's roles, because, as women, they have their own roles and are expected to abide by these.

The second teacher with similar views had this to say about the gender roles in *Is It Possible?* (Ole Kulet: 1974):

...we see a lot of men's coverage. But we also see their mothers and their roles as women in families. We do not talk of the biological roles...we talk about the family and social roles women should perform...they are shown in the book and we accept them and nothing need to be changed during teaching (Male teacher in School B, 28 Jan 2009).

Moreover, giving instances from another text, *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe: 1958), this teacher continued to explain that he likes the way Achebe has portrayed gender relations among his characters. In particular, he pointed out that he likes the character of Okonkwo as being an 'aggressive' man toward his wives and everybody around him. He described Okonkwo as a good role-model to fathers who should learn to bring up their sons 'as men, strong and hardworking'.

The same teacher, the oldest in the sample, went even further and, told the researcher that 'the equality thing' was not going to work for Africa. He maintained that it was the researchers themselves who are seeking to find gender problems in the texts. However, the texts should be taken at face value because they portray real life situations and societal cultures. He described any work of art as a 'mirror' which reflects social realities. Quite surprisingly he argued in favour of African traditional practices such as female genital mutilation as shown in Ngugi's novel, *The River Between*. The following quote exemplifies this point:

You know those who initiated this practice [female genital mutilation] did it with a good purpose. They had their reasons to do it and they were not stupid...the cervical and breast cancers for women are caused by them not

being circumcised. Such diseases were not here in the past, but now because of the changes you claim to bring to our societies they come along with other problems...(Male teacher in School B, 28 Jan 2009).

Another point he tried to justify was the issue of arranged marriage. Here, he gave as an example the character of Juliette in *Three Suitors, One Husband*. He maintained that 'parents can foresee the future and they would not choose a bad suitor for their daughters; they would not give them a snake instead of a fish'.

On the other hand, four of the teachers encouraged **critical engagement with the texts**. They said that they found the majority of the texts difficult to teach because they seemed to promote undesirable traditions such as the system of polygamy, which hinders the fight against HIV/AIDS, and which, they argued, should be abandoned in this era. There were also male teachers in this group, the teachers in Schools D (Degree holder, 30+ years old, in a mixed/Islamic mixed urban school) and E (Degree holder, 30+ years old, in a mixed rural/outskirts school), who felt strongly about the way women are portrayed in the texts. These teachers argued that there is a need to have texts which reflect the oppression of women in African society as means of exclusion from decision, making processes and by traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. However, there is also a need for texts which show the current mood where women are awakening to challenges such as the practice of female genital mutilation, and early and arranged marriages. The teachers had not given much consideration as to how they would encourage a more thorough and nuanced reading of the texts.

In addition, teachers noted that African women are increasingly involving themselves in politics and competing for political positions at all levels and were disappointed that none of the texts reflected this new reality. One male teacher from School E (Degree holder, 30+ years old, in a mixed rural/outskirts school), for example, criticised *Passed Like a Shadow* (Mapalala: 2006) saying that, despite the fact that it had been written recently, it had failed to distance itself from portraying gender stereotypes in the same way that texts written a half a century ago had done. Although this teacher said that the text reflected reality, especially as it deals with the

issue of HIV/AIDS, he questioned the way in which women in East Africa are portrayed as being ignorant of the disease. He argued:

...the way they [women] are ignorant of the disease [AIDS] is questionable. I think nowadays people are more aware of the ways to contract the virus but in the book they are portrayed as not aware completely...sharing the same razor blades and piercing instruments (Male teacher in School E, 23 Feb 2009).

Another male teacher in School D (Degree holder, 30+ years old, in a mixed/Islamic mixed urban school) believed that two of the texts, namely: *Three Suitors*, *One Husband* (Oyono Mbia: 1960) and *This Time Tomorrow* (Ngugi: 1962) appeared to justify rather than critique women's oppression:

Of course women are represented as oppressed and humiliated. They are the only group working hard in farming and other difficult work in *Three Suitors*, *One Husband* and in *This Time Tomorrow* whilst men are at home doing light jobs...small activities like sculpturing and embroidery. The division of labour justifies that women are oppressed...actually the whole setting of the plays prove to be very oppressive towards women (Male teacher in School D, 16 Feb 2009).

He also drew on examples from *Things Fall Apart*, saying that the author had portrayed women as the ones who did not have any constructive ideas or sound judgement on important areas such as religion, or even at the family level. The issue of polygamy was also raised by this participant as one of the issues that humiliated women. He wondered:

Do men like Okonkwo think of how women feel about having co-wives or do they take things for granted? If we use a similar example in *Three Suitors*, *One Husband*, Mbia has eight wives and yet he wants to marry Juliette. This reveals how the position of women in society is undermined (Male teacher in School D, 16 Feb 2009).

A female teacher in School F (Degree holder, 40+ years old, in Boys' urban school) added, along the same lines:

Women are portrayed as inferior, as in *Things Fall Apart*...not given chance to speak their opinions. Likewise in *Song of Lawino and Ocol* they lack an

opportunity for education as Lawino is complaining that her husband despises her because she does not even know the letter 'a' (Female teacher, School F, 24 Feb 2009).

Similarly, another teacher (Diploma holder, 40+ years old, in a Girls' rural school) used *The Great Ponds* (Amadi, 1969) to describe gender images:

A man's image is on top everywhere, portrayed as warriors, as we see in examples from the main characters such as Wago, Olumba and the chiefs. Women are mentioned as properties of men performing domestic roles and taking care of children (Female teacher in School A, 27 Jan 2009).

These teachers felt that the use of such texts was problematic, since many teachers would encourage pupils to take the traditional gender roles which were portrayed at face value.

Teachers' views on the influence of their teaching methodology

All teachers concurred with the claim that the influence of the texts on students regarding gender issues depended on their teaching methodology. They also offered other factors which might have contributed to the poor teaching methodology of gender issues. For example, they all complained at not receiving any orientation or guidance on how to include the issue of gender in their daily teaching, apart from just being told to include such a topic. Officials agreed with this view (see Officials' views of the teacher's role and feedback mechanism to monitor policy implementation section in this chapter), explaining that the lack of induction, seminars and workshops for teachers was due to a constraint on funds.

Teachers also mentioned other factors such as the lack of teaching facilities and books. One would concur with them as the current situation is this: each school is responsible for purchasing its own books. This has proved to be a major challenge to most schools, especially the rural government ones, where classes are crowded and the economic situation is less stable than that of urban and private schools. In urban schools, most parents might alternatively buy books for their own children which they can use at home, whilst in rural schools students rely heavily on what the school can offer. In government schools, most teachers complained that they had no access

to facilities for adapting materials for effective classroom use, such as paper, manila cards, marker pens, and duplicating or photocopying machines for reproducing text from their few existing books, whilst these facilities were available in some private schools. Some teachers said they used their own money to carry out photocopying to create additional textual access for their students, but obviously this is a very limited option and should not be characterized as being part of a teacher's duties (See Chapter Six for the observed classroom situations).

Urban teachers, like in Schools B, D and F, said that some of the students were able to get their own materials. For instance, a teacher would give one copy for them to produce their own copies. Things were different in rural schools like School C, where facilities such as photocopiers were not even available. However, in School E, the school owned a number of expensive facilities such as photocopiers, scanners and computers, and so was shielded from many of the difficulties that the other schools faced, including those faced by School D, another private school.

The insufficient time allocated for the literature class was yet another limitation put forward by all teachers. Currently, the English syllabus has allocated four periods for English and two for literature per week, making a total of six; each period contains forty minutes. Given the scarcity of the texts, eighty minutes for literature per week were considered as being insufficient to read and discuss the texts in depth. And given all the other problems already stated, teachers maintained that this reduced their opportunities to be creative and affected their approach towards teaching gender and other topics as well.

Teachers' view of parental influence

Further, teachers also espoused the idea that students are most influenced by the upbringing they receive at home. All six teachers maintained that their role was not to transfer knowledge to their students. Teachers explained that they were not supposed to maintain the position of being an authoritative knowledge source; rather, students were to be considered as having, or being, an equal source of knowledge; therefore, their role in influencing their students was hampered by the fact that they were just facilitators of learning through discussion, and in soliciting views from

their students. In this case, they argued that any perceived influence would depend on individual students' opinions about gender representation in the texts, and on the level of influence taken from their parents.

As a matter of comparison, the above claim was confirmed by the Inspectorate official. Also an official from Tanzania Institute of Education concurred with the teachers' argument that parents can have just as big an influence on their children as teachers do. She explained that people behave in certain ways because of the upbringing they receive, irrespective of gender. She said that 'a man who was brought up in house where both boys and girls shared the domestic work would be different from the one who was taught that specific gender roles such as kitchen work is for women'

The 'revolutionary mindset' was associated with parents of an educated class in society by teachers. For example, a female teacher in School A (Diploma holder, 40+ years old, in a Girls' rural school) considered herself as having revolutionary ideas because of her family background. She explained how she has taught her own son to cook and carry out all the kitchen chores. She also drew on an example from her students in School A:

...Many of our students here are from poor backgrounds and their parents are just uneducated peasants and a few from educated parents. I see a huge difference between the two groups of students. The former group start seeing the texts here in school and they would not be critical of them, while the latter come to school knowing exactly what is in the curriculum and no wonder, they have already discussed it with their parents because in their essays you would see a kind of gender issues knowledge (Female teacher in School A, 27.1. 2009).

Summary and conclusion

Chapter Five dealt with the results of the study undertaken with the participants. Alongside the discussion, it has presented the results of the study from the policy makers' and teachers' interviews. The chapter has attempted to answer this research question: *What are the views and perceptions of curriculum planners and policy makers, teachers, and students about such gender representations?* This required the

policy makers and teachers to give their views on the gender representations in the literary texts used in Tanzanian secondary schools. The minor operational questions in the semi-structured interview sought to elicit information that related to policy and curriculum (for policy makers) and the teaching of literature (for teachers), particularly where gender issues were concerned. The chapter began by explaining the roles of officials in policy making and curriculum development, and their relations with teachers, who are the key implementers of the educational policies at the classroom level, and proceeded to disclose the officials' and teachers' views concerning the gender representations in the chosen texts and selection of the texts and the teaching-learning process.

Most officials were unaware of which texts were currently being used and had not read them. They were therefore unaware of whether these texts could be used to promote a critique of gender representations.

Regarding the educational value of the literary texts discussed, some, but not all, of the teachers seemed not to understand that these texts could be so useful in stimulating classroom discussions about gender relations. Two of the six teachers took the traditional gender representations at face value, rather than recognising their potential for stimulating discussion about gender relations and identity.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the texts were written at different historical points and the authors differ in relation to their stand point. However, all have the potential to stimulate critical engagement with traditional African culture and values.

This study contends that these texts could be used to initiate debate in Tanzanian literature classes regarding gender representation and the way authors, playwrights and poets use characters to convey themes required for change. However, at the moment, teachers and officials did not appear to be encouraging critical engagement with the texts.

CHAPTER SIX

LITERATURE CLASSROOM PRACTICES AND STUDENTS' VIEWS

Introduction

In this chapter, the analysis of the teachers' classroom practices and students' views is presented and discussed with particular focus on how teachers mediated the set literary texts with regard to representation of gender and how pupils responded to them. The following table which initially summarised the study sample is hereunder reproduced to show the schools below.

Table 6.1: Summary of the schools

Regions	Schools	School Type		Form Four Students		Teachers		Curriculum designer	Policy makers
		Rural/Outskirts Of Town	Urban	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Dar es Salaam	A	Girls		2	2	1		1	3
	B		Mixed	2	2		1		
Mwanza	C	Mixed		2	2	1			
	D		Mixed	2	2		1		
Dodoma	E	Mixed Outskirts		2	2	1			
	F		Boys	2	2		1		
Total	6	3	3	12	12	3	3	1	3
TOTAL		6 Schools		24 Students		6 Teachers		4 Officials	

Six literature teachers, one from each school in the sample, were observed in their classes. The purpose of each observation was to see how teachers delivered the subject matter with regard to gender representation. A total of six lessons were

observed: each lesson lasted 80 minutes, which combined a 'double period' of two 40-minute periods (except in one private school, School E, where one lesson lasted 45 minutes).

Further, twenty four students participated in the group interview, four from each school. As discussed in Chapter Three, these were volunteers and in the co-education schools two girls and two boys were chosen.

The purpose of the group interview with students was to develop an understanding of the message they gleaned from their reading of the texts and the teachers' mediation of these texts in relation to discourses of gender.

Although the small number of observations does not allow findings to be generalised to all schools in Tanzania, it was the case that by making observations in each of the six schools I was able to recognise the similarities, as well as the differences, in the teaching methods used in the following different types of school: urban and rural; government and private; and mixed and single-sex schools. Apart from these differences, the observation revealed that five schools among the six observed had one characteristic in common, a shortage of teaching and learning materials, and this factor was a significant cause of difficulties in engaging pupils in discussion and critique. Only a few copies of the texts were available, vastly disproportional to the number of students in the class and most of these were owned by teachers or individual students rather than by schools.

School vignettes

School E is among the elite schools in Tanzania which emphasise the use of English medium of instruction. Such schools are known as international schools or academies. The building is new and spacious with ceiling fans to counteract the warm Dar es Salaam weather. The general appearance of the students was impressive in that both female and male students appeared smart and were neatly dressed in school uniforms, with girls and boys wearing ties of the same colour as their skirts and trousers.

In most government schools, like School A, things were a bit different. This school is situated in a very nice environment. However, it contains a number old buildings which seem not to have been upgraded for so long. Everything in the class seemed very old, including the blackboard, windows and door. From their appearance and from the teacher's remarks during the interview with her, it was obvious that most students come from poor families.

Likewise in School B: this is a government co-education school located in the city centre of the region and has about 70 students in one stream of the Form Four class I observed. It has a very old infrastructure. For instance, it was unfortunately raining on the day I was observing, so we had to postpone the class for several hours as the ceiling was leaking severely and the class was full of water. This shows the situation of schooling in such old infrastructure blocks during rain seasons.

School C is a private rural community school. Community schools in Tanzania are built by parents, volunteers or NGOs under local government support. Apart from using Kiswahili in school C, pupils unofficially use their native languages in classes and in group discussions. This school mostly admit primary school failures most of whom are from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The school has a few simple new buildings but it was noted that it has acute shortages of staff and resources. For example there was a small room called a library with a few books. Moreover, despite having Form Four students studying science subjects, at the moment of observation, the school had not any laboratory.

School D is located in an urban area. Although the school is called Islamic but it admits non-Muslim students and employs non-Muslim teachers provided that they conform to the Islamic rules governing the school. Like other private schools in Tanzania, this school uses English as an instructional medium and also uses the national curriculum but in addition to that it has Islamic subjects which make use of Arabic language.

School F is a boys' school located at Dar es Salaam city centre. The buildings are old and so are other amenities like the boards in classrooms, doors and windows. Like

many urban schools in Tanzania, the school is big and has two sessions: one comes in the morning the other comes in the afternoon, just like Schools B and D.

In all government schools the selection is based on Tanzanian National Examinations Council results whilst the private schools , candidates are given proficiency test before admittance; only scorers with high marks and those economically able gain admittance as the schools charge very high fees (See chapter One).

The table below summarises information about the following: school categories and characteristics; the nature of the lessons observed; the characteristics of teachers; the mode of teaching the teachers applied; the levels of engagement and kind of activities the students got involved in; the books being studied and the authors' details; the number of copies of the texts available on the observation day; and the number of students in each class observed.

Table 6.2 Classroom practice: lesson observation

School	School categories and characteristics	Texts studied and their details	Teaching approach & Students' activities	Teacher's details/ age	Number of students
A 27 Jan 09	A: rural, government, girls' school, old, socially disadvantaged, small fees, mixed-ability streams, practically, but not strictly English medium	Amadi's (1969, Nigerian) <i>The Great Ponds</i> (novel), potential to stimulating gender discussion 4 copies	Teacher centred approach: lecturing, not activity based, writing on the board, closed questions Students listen, answer in chorus & jot down notes	Female Diploma holder	56
B 29 Jan 09	B: urban city centre, government, very old, crowded, mixed school, mixed-ability streams, middle class students, small fees, not strictly English medium, big classroom	Ole-Kulet's (1971, Kenyan) <i>Is It Possible?</i> (novel), gender discussion potential 9 copies	Students read one by one in front of the class Teacher asks, boys dominate the class	Male Uni.candidate	70
C 13Feb 09	C: rural, private (community school built by parents and volunteers), mixed, admits primary school failures, socially & economically disadvantaged, new building but few staff, acute shortage of resources, not strictly English medium	P' Bitek's (1966, Ugandan) <i>Song of Lavino & Ocol</i> (poem) and Achebe's (1958, Nigerian) <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (novel), both texts reveal gender issues 3 copies of <i>Song of Lavino</i>	Discursive approach: teacher moves from <i>Things Fall Apart</i> to <i>Song of Lavino & Ocol</i> . Teacher reads mostly; students listen, read one by one in front of the class, boys dominate the class	Female Diploma holder	52
D 16Feb 09	D: urban city centre, private but not 'academy/international', mixed, crowded, Islamic, middle class students, high fees, encourages English medium & Arabic	Kundi's (1980, Tanzanian) "Development" (poem), does not reveal much on gender issues. 10 copies	Students read in groups, teacher asks questions, boys dominate the class	Male Uni-graduate	67
E 26Feb 09	E: outskirts of the city, private academy (sometimes called 'International School' because English is strictly the medium of instruction in classes and outwith), mixed, upper social class students, high fees and academically selective, owned by a Christian person but not characterised as a 'Christian school'	Mapalala's (2006, Tanzanian) <i>Passed Like a Shadow</i> (novel), A feminist text, potential for gender discussion 31 copies	Participatory methodology: activity based, enquiry method, group discussions (girls v boys) Both boys & girls actively speak up	Male Uni-graduate	30
F 24Feb 09	F: urban, government, boys' school, old, middle class student background, mixed-ability streams, not strictly English medium	<i>Three Suitors, One Husband</i> (play), dictates gender discussion; 6 copies; and <i>The Lion and the Jewel</i> (play).	Teacher-led discussions in groups, write on the board, take notes	Female Uni. graduate	45

Since ‘observation should have issues of focus’ (Richards, 2003:110) a set of observation schedule was used to guide through each observation (See Appendices) This was designed to focus on the mode of teaching, whether the teacher applied a participatory method of involving students in discussion; or it was a teacher-centred approach whereby the teacher assumes a dominant role in classroom interaction or student-centred; or whether the interaction was reciprocal with different patterns of interaction between teacher and students, students and students. It also focused on the way in which the teacher delivered the lesson, whether it was formal or informal interaction and how pupils interacted with each other in pairs or in groups. Students’ activities such as reading, writing, listening, role playing, dramatisation and discussion were also considered. Lastly, the observation guide considered the physical environment, including the classroom appearance, space, students’ appearance, their posture and the general atmosphere of the classroom. All of these aspects were linked to the analysis of the gender discourses in the classroom.

Apart from the major purpose of observing , that is, to see how teachers delivered the subject matter with regard to gender representation, I also noted during the observations whether activities like dramatisation or role playing were carried out in class. I also took note of the physical set-up of the classrooms, the seating arrangements of students, the general atmosphere in each of the classrooms, the interaction and non-verbal interactions, the availability of desks in each classroom, whether students had sufficient books or whether they were sharing, the levels of engagement, and the kind of activities the students were involved in. In addition, I copied down what was written by the teachers on the board, most of which was also copied by students. In most schools I visited, I was given a place to sit at the back of the classroom.

Teaching and learning resources available in each school

Teaching and learning materials, in any subject, are vital as they play a significant role in ensuring that the teaching and learning process is enhanced. In the schools observed, the availability of resources varied from one school to another, depending on the nature of ownership. Private schools, especially those called ‘international’ or

‘academies’, as in School E’s case, were greatly enriched with proper infrastructure such as buildings, libraries, desks and chairs. Resources such as books and the other required amenities were plentiful. In school E (outskirts of the city, private, an academy, mixed school) for instance, there was even a library for special use of the English Department. Although the English library in School E was undergoing expansion, it had some books and space for students to use for private study or group discussion (photos1 & 2).

Photo 1-2: Researcher and teacher; students in School E’s English Department library



School E was private and had a small number of students per class. For instance, the class I observed had only 30 students. Unlike students in the other five schools, where crowding necessitated the sharing of desks and materials, students here seemed relaxed and enjoyed having their own desks and texts. Through their active participation in the discussion of the novel, it was obvious that they had all read it before coming to class. In fact, School E was the only school where all students in the observed class owned their own copy of the text being studied. I was also informed that the school owned computers for all its students to use, which was not the case in the other five schools I visited.

The inadequate number of literary texts was evident in schools A (rural, government, girls’ school), B (urban city centre, government, mixed school), C (rural,

private/community school, mixed), D (urban city centre, private/Islamic school, mixed) and F (urban city centre, government, boys' school). Texts were available but there were very few compared to the number of students who needed them. The large number of students in these schools was not nearly proportional to the texts available. In these schools, three students or more shared a copy of the text in class and many of the students had not read the text before coming to class. As well as a shortage of texts, there were also insufficient desks, forcing some students to share (see photos 3).

Photo 3: Some students in School C sharing a desk



The same applied to school D where 67 students had to share copies of the poem “Development” which was used in class (photo 4).

Photo 4: Students in School D sharing copies of the poem into groups



The small class was so full that movement about the class was very limited, and as a result the teacher remained rooted in front of the class. Moreover, the inadequate resources and the methods employed by teachers were to a great extent influenced by the availability of the literary texts, so that the teaching methods, for example in School D, tended to be mostly teacher-centred. Thus, lessons were dominated by the teacher, who lectured about the poem and wrote on the blackboard the summary of what he talked about (photo 5).

Photo 5: Teacher in School D writing on the board



One may argue that reliance on the board for teaching means that gender discussion and learning in general is very confined because of the limited blackboard space in most schools, as only a small amount of work can be written on it at any one time. Although all the schools had large blackboards extending the whole way across the front wall, such a method creates another problem. The existing work on the board has to be erased at the end of the period as the teacher is required to clear the board for the next teacher's use. In School F, although the class is very spacious and had only forty five students, the six copies of the text available to all the students and their teacher were not nearly enough. The teacher struggled to divide the class into a suitably proportional number of students to the available texts. Each group had at least nine students, all of whom claimed to have read the text, although some did not participate fully in the discussion as they were not well accommodated in the group (see photo 6).

Photo 6: Group discussion in School F



The situation of teaching and learning materials was worse in School C, a Community Secondary School. The Community Secondary Schools are mostly in rural Tanzania, as in the case of School C. These schools are established by parents and volunteers such as NGOs and donors at ward and district levels and are supposed to be run under the partnership between the community and the local government. However, it was noted that the local government was taking no responsibility for school provisions with regard to the school budget for materials and equipment. Yet another problem was understaffing: the teacher I observed clarified later that she was teaching literature from Form One to Form Four with each form having more than one stream. Although the classroom is fairly big, it does not have enough desks to cope with over 50 students - and I was told that some did not attend. The teacher had one copy of the text and students had two copies which they alternately read aloud in front of the class. Some shared the desks, making it difficult to write down notes or do any activity. There were three copies of *Song of Lawino and Ocol*, the text used for discussion on the day I visited. As a result, the teacher used most of the time to read paragraphs from her own copy or gave notes, whilst the students were passive participants most of the time. This teacher mainly read from the text. This went on for some time then she stopped and started explaining some points from what she was reading. This became the major thread of her lesson, with occasional pauses to ask students some questions.

Moreover, some students had some ‘ready-made’ detailed notes in their jotters about *Song of Lawino and Ocol*, a text which had only recently been introduced. These notes provided summaries of all the chapters of the text and the themes found in the text. So, instead of sharing the texts, the students were reading from these exercise books. Their jotters had also notes of various other texts, including the play *Rwanda Magere* [for Form Five and Six] and those which had not yet been studied in class, such as *This Time Tomorrow*. I found out later that these notes had been taken by previous students who had studied literature and had written summaries of the chapters and themes of the books. I was told that some of the notes were obtained in town schools by a few students who were able to travel during the vacation to their relatives in town where they could receive some ‘tuition’. This fact did not seem to bother the teacher at all as she confirmed later that because the texts have been the same for years, and with limited resources of such texts in school, then students had no other choice but to resort to these methods. I asked the teacher if this habit might change if the school were better equipped with resources and texts books. She was not certain, however, whether that would change matters, but she was sure that students would read more than they were presently doing, as most of them did not read the texts. They ‘crammed’ some summaries of what the texts were about and what the themes were in order to be able to sit the examination. Their general knowledge about the texts was very shallow and barred them from having a critical discussion of the text in any great detail.

Nature of classroom discussion

The observations revealed that the texts were often not tackled critically in classroom discussions. There is a great common teaching trend across the sample and in how teachers organised their literature lessons. The observed teachers used the ‘thematic approach’ in tackling the literary texts, trying to fit discussion under the prescribed headings in a somewhat rigid manner. The main themes were the same across the texts, such as conflict, protest, alienation, tradition and family, building the nation, betrayal, corruption, and the position of women in society. According to the teachers, these are the major themes to be tackled in the national examinations, and are

reflected in the examinations issued by the National Examination Council of Tanzania. The examinations therefore dictate their teaching methods.

In general, the content of the teaching of a literary text was divided into two major parts: namely, 'form' and 'content', the latter being the area that most emphasis was given to during teaching. The form comprises aspects such as the title of the book, semiotics – mostly on the book cover, the setting of the book, the style of writing used in the book, the names of the characters and the language used. The content comprises the themes of the text.

Though all the teachers observed, except the teacher in School D (urban, private, mixed), dealt with gender issues from a variety of angles, they generally adhered to the theme of the position of women in society as specified in curriculum documents and the examinations. They generally requested pupils to describe how women (but not men) were portrayed, with apparently little understanding of tone and nuance within the texts. Despite the fact that gender is a theme that would be relevant to both men and women, these teachers overwhelmingly focused on women's portrayals in the literary texts they used.

Compared to other schools, as discussed later in this chapter, the thematic approach was tackled somewhat differently in school E (outskirts of the city, private/an academy, mixed), even though the theme 'Position of Women' was still mentioned. Here, the teacher was teaching the text *Passed like a Shadow* by Mapalala (2006), which explicitly tackles HIV/AIDS and African cultural practices.

The class was split into separate small groups of girls and boys to discuss the characters. Girls' groups were assigned to discuss how the male characters were portrayed in the texts, while boys' groups discussed the way female characters were portrayed, and then each group gave their feedback in front of the class. The girls were seen to defend the female characters from the beginning of the presentation to the end, as they said the boys were not discussing the issue fairly. For example, it was maintained by the boys that it was the wives and mistresses who infected their husbands with HIV, whereas the girls argued that while the text may have indicated that, in reality it was mainly unfaithful men who infected their wives. The girls

appeared to feel uncomfortable about the depiction of women as prostitutes, and there was no discussion of the economic conditions which might make this necessary by either the girls' or boys' groups. The following are some examples from the feedback given in class:

Boys' representative: Position of Women, this is the role of women in the family. Women in the novel *Passed like a Shadow* are portrayed as a tool and instrument for men's pleasure.

Boys' representative continues: Women are portrayed as prostitutes, one woman having several sexual partners who are not legally married to her.

Girls' group: (grumbles expressing disapproval).

Girls' representative: No-oo! Even men are portrayed as prostitutes, like Adyeri!

A boy in the group towards the girls: Ssh! [quiet]

Boys' representative: Women are the ones who infect men with HIV. Examples: Birungi, the concubine of Adyeri, has infected Adyeri, as seen by the fact that she has other men apart from Adyeri...Vicky had several men before she married Aliganyira, therefore she infected her husband...and David's father picked up the virus from their house girl who was very attractive.

Girls in the group: Not really, it's not true... [Interrupting with occasional shouts to disagree with the boys' presentation] (Students in School E, 26 Feb 2009).

It was obvious that the boys' claim that "David's father picked up the virus from their house girl who was very attractive" was reproduced from the book without making any critique as shown in page 48:

As for David, things were just as bad because his flamboyant dad had perished and now his mother and the attractive house-girl were on their death beds. People murmured that it was the house-girl who had caused it all.

During their presentation, the girls challenged the idea suggested by the boys that the women were responsible for the spread of HIV. The girls chose examples that challenged the claim that women infected men with HIV/AIDS by referring to characters such as Adyeri, who is believed to have infected his innocent wife, Amoti. Further, the girls argued that it was David's father who had infected the house girl as

it is shown in the book that he picked up women from the streets now and then while the book does not describe the house girl in that way. They also used the example of Aliganyika, Vicky's husband, who had the habit of marrying young girls and then divorcing them whenever he became tired of them.

It seemed that both the boys and the girls had read the book and they were familiar with it. The difference was that the boys had different interpretations and opinions about the female characters compared to the girls in the class. Whereas the boys were quick to condemn women who had several sexual partners, they were uncritical of men. The girls, on the other hand, pointed out the double standards which were being applied.

Although the class observed in school E was the only one which dealt with gender representation in some depth compared to other schools, however, I would argue that dividing the class into groups of boys and girls caused polarised responses. Moreover, what was missing was the drawing together of a conclusion from what the students had discussed. For example, the question of what the author intended to convey to the audience could have concluded the discussion. They did have a discussion on 'messages found in the text' which they called 'themes', but they did not go into any great detail as to why they thought characters were portrayed in that way. As an example, the class could have discussed the way Mapalala decided to portray women in *Passed like a Shadow* as being so naive about the disease that they infected their husbands with HIV. The conclusion could have cleared up any misconceptions raised by students in the course of the discussion such as the question of who was responsible for passing on the infection. Similarly, the following questions could have been posed to conclude the discussion: Is it because the author wanted to depict the myth found in East African societies around the disease in order to criticize that? Or is it because that was what he believed to be the roles played by men and women in reality, as far as the infection and the spread of HIV/AIDS is concerned?

The teacher explained later that teachers try to keep the author out of the spotlight because literature depends entirely on individuals' interpretations. Moreover, he

argued that they also try to prepare students for examination questions that Form Four students would be expected to answer, rather than those questions of a more literary and critical nature that university students would expect to encounter. In other schools teachers I observed ended their lessons by dividing the students into groups and then issued some homework to be discussed within these groups, as was the case in Schools B and C. No group work was conducted within the period time but rather at the end of the lesson as homework. One might argue that this could be done within the 80 minutes available to the literature class by obtaining feedback before the students leave the class and go on to their next duties. For instance, some students subsequently have different classes to attend after the literature class, while others have to go home, or go to their boarding flats. Above all, there should perhaps be no need for time spent on any teacher supervision outwith the classroom.

However, although this class was livelier than the other classes I observed, there are aspects of this classroom practice which might be questioned. For instance, dividing pupils into girls' and boys' groups might discourage either sex from questioning their critical position. The teaching technique in this class seemed to encourage boys in particular to cement rather than interrogate received opinions.

Addressing the theme 'Position of Women'

As already stated, most teachers in the sample either mentioned or discussed the theme 'Position of Women' as it is supposed to be one of the core themes in the curriculum. But as the title of the theme suggests, most discussion centred on the female characters, although teachers claimed to be discussing gender representation. Although this was one way of discussing gender representation in the texts, it meant that the structure and relationships between men and women, and issues of masculinity and gender relations were not discussed. Instead, what teachers would do on this theme, particularly the most inexperienced one like the teacher in School C (rural mixed school), was to ask students to say how women are portrayed in the texts and then compare these portrayals to the real-life situation. When a student responded, the teacher would then ask the student to identify the page where that

example was to be found. The teacher would then ask if this is what is really happening in society today and students would then mostly reply in unison 'yes', and that would be the end of the discussion on the theme. Debate was not encouraged and chorus and one word answers were accepted as normal.

Unlike the other two female teachers In Schools A (rural, government, girls') and F (urban city centre, government, boys'), the teacher in School C (rural, private/community, mixed) did not arouse much the gender representation discussion. The following example of the female teacher in School F (Urban boys' school) tried to initiate a discussion on the gender portrayals of the characters:

Teacher: What can you say about the theme 'position of women' in this play, *Three Suitors*, *One Husband*?

Boy 1: Women are used as a source of income.

Teacher: Yes. Who can give an example of a character that was used as a source of income?

Other boys: Juliette.

Teacher: What else can we say about the position of women?

Boy 2: Women are given no chance to exercise their freedom.

Boy 3: Women are humiliated.

Teacher: How?

Boy 3 clarifies: Girls are not given the right to choose their partners.

Teacher: (Turning to another side of the class) What do you think about the tradition of parents choosing husbands for their girls?

Boys (some): It's okay... It's okay [laughter].

Boy 4: No, it's humiliation.

Teacher: (Facing the whole class) Do you think in our society today parents still do the same?

Boys: (chorus) Yes! (Female teacher and students in School F, 24th Feb 2009).

She undoubtedly could have taken this discussion further. For example, by posing further questions on the humiliation of women, or what could be done to improve the economic position of women. She could also have invited pupils to critique the performance of masculinity rather than focusing exclusively on female deficit. When it was obvious there was even disagreement amongst the boys, she could have probed the reasons for their different perspectives. Or, she could have allowed students to discuss the advantages or disadvantages of early and arranged marriages, or by encouraging discussion of some of the other characters, including males, apart from Juliette. For instance, both Juliette and Oko were teenagers studying in secondary school, just like the students themselves. So, further exploration of the consequences of early marriage might have raised some interesting issues. Instead, the whole discussion was centred on Juliette alone as the main character, she being the victim of the arranged marriage proposals. In addition, other women, such as Juliette's mother, aunt, cousin and grandmother had also played significant roles worthy of discussion.

Moreover, as this is a boys' school, more could have been discussed about the male characters as well, for instance Mbia, who had eight wives and wanted Juliette to be his ninth, or Mbarga, the village leader who had as many wives as Mbia; it would have been interesting to find out what the boys' views about the polygamy system are [polygamy is practiced by Muslims and tribal men whereby they are legally allowed to have more than one wife] and what its effects are on people's social relations, especially among the women themselves. They could also have discussed the relevance of this play to today's society since it is five decades now since its publication in 1960. This teacher explained that the time allocated for literature is not sufficient to discuss the different themes in depth, as each theme had to be dealt with in order to finish the set texts before examinations.

Another example is from the same class. Students had divided opinions when they were asked by their teacher about the author's intention in *The Lion and the Jewel*. Some said the author wanted to show the readers how women fail in emancipation struggle just like Sidi who married the tricky old man, Chief Baroka, without her wish. Others said that the author wanted to reveal to the society how some old men

like the chief do not behave themselves and therefore people especially girls like Sidi should be aware of that. Prior to switching to *The Lion and The Jewel*, this class was discussing *Three Suitors*, *One Husband* then in the course of discussing the teacher reminded them about the play they previously finished reading in class called *The Lion and the Jewel*. She continued:

Teacher: Do you remember this play by Soyinka?

Boyss [chorus]: Yes

Teacher: What is the title of the play? Can you see-you backbenchers [pointing to students seated at the back]

Boys [chorus]: *The Lion and the Jewel*

Teacher: Ok. Now who can tell me, what is the author's point of view?

[Students are discussing at the back]

Teacher: [moving towards them and pointing to one student], tell us, what is the author's point of view? What did he intend? We discussed this book previously.

Boy 1: I think Achebe wanted...

All class: Laughter

Boy 1: [then realising his mistake he also laughs and continues] I think Soyinka was telling us that women will never win their struggle for their rights just like Sidi.

Teacher: Do you think so?

Boy 2: Yes, the author shows the failure of women's liberation when Sidi marries the chief

Boy 3: No, the author wanted to make people aware of such men like Baroka who are womanisers (Female teacher and students in School F, 24th Feb 2009).

[Students start discussing on their own, while the teacher talks with someone at the door. She returns and changes the subject matter]

More discussion on how the economic structure of masculinity allowed men like Baroka to get women; or drawing a comparison between the two plays, *Three Suitors*, *One Husband* and *The Lion and The Jewel* would have been very interesting.

Failure to engage pupils in critical discussion

As I observed in classrooms, it was evident that some teachers tried to involve students in some discussions through different techniques but with no great success. Students and their teacher in School A (rural, government, girls'), spoke briefly about some episodes that concerned women in the novel *The Great Ponds* (Amadi, 1969). The teacher in school A identified passages that concerned the gender portrayals of characters and initiated other interesting topics but could not develop the key ideas by developing these issues further with students. Here is an example:

Teacher: Who can tell us something on the Position of Women in this novel *The Great Ponds*?

Lucy: The novel reveals that women are not valued in society.

Teacher: An example from the book?

Lucy: For example, when one male prisoner was exchanged for four women.

Teacher: Yes, the exchange programme: one man is equal to four women put together. Another example is when Ilendu sold the women he kidnapped. What can you say about that? You girls are just commodities for sale, huh?

Girls: (Laughter)

Anna: No.

Teacher: What about 'bride-pricing'? Is it not about selling girls?

Girls: (Silence).

Teacher: Okay, another theme? (Female teacher & students in School A, 27 Jan 2009)

The example about 'one man is equal to four women' could have been developed much more skilfully to encourage more class discussion. As this is a girls' school, it might have been possible to hear more about the girls' views on gender

representation, instead of confining them to a situation where they only have to answer 'yes' or 'no', or just laugh. In addition, the teacher here did not follow up her question about the issue of bride pricing or probe Anna for her 'no' response for the first question, or probe the other students to respond further; rather, she went on to ask about other themes. It was not clear as to why the girl did not respond or whether they did not understand the question. This teacher failed to respond to the 'silence reaction' and try to see if the silence meant understanding, confusion or just disinterest of students. She was not doing so on gender issues alone but throughout her lesson.

On another occasion, the same teacher in School A tried to use irony to encourage pupils to adopt a critical stance to the depiction of gender relations in *The Great ponds*:

Teacher [having read from the book]: Oda was among the kidnapped women from Chiolu. She was Olumba's most loved wife; he loved her the most because she bore him a baby boy whilst other women had only girls. Do you see? When you get married you have to make sure you get baby boys.

Girls: Laughter [other students rolling their eyes]

Teacher: (Continues reading some paragraphs) (Female teacher & students in School A, 27 Jan 2009)

Here, the girls in this Girls' school were not given a chance to respond to the suggestion that they should have boys. It was not clear whether rolling their eyes meant that they were not interested with the question or did not mind at all about the suggestion. The laughter is also something not very much clear. The importance of baby boys described in the book as being in the real African context was not pursued in classroom discussion despite being mentioned by the teacher.

In another instance, the same teacher talked about the oath which was undertaken by the main character, Olumba, in order to save the village ponds and she raised a gender issue rather insensitively. She said:

Teacher: Olumba sacrificed his life for the village; he took the oath. How many things would you sacrifice in your life for?

Girl: Two things...

Teacher: Your boyfriend and what?

Girls: (chorus of laughter)

[the girl who responded 'two things' bows her head down as a sign of feeling embarrassed] (School A, 27 Jan 2009)

For teenagers who are still in schooling, such as these the Form Four students in Tanzania, having a boyfriend is considered unacceptable. Normally girls can not say publicly that they have got boyfriends as this is considered immoral. Therefore with this teacher's suggestion that the girl had a boyfriend evidently embarrassed her. In the follow-up interview, asked about this specific episode the teacher explained that she was trying to create a sense of humour atmosphere in class. Just like others teachers, this teacher complained that the time allocated for literature was not enough to deal with the themes in detail, thus she could not wait to listen to the two things mentioned by the girl. This teacher was trying to use gender to encourage her pupils, but did not succeed in promoting discussion. Singling out an individual pupil as the object of ridicule embarrassed the individual and alienated the others. Evidently, this classroom exchange came as quite aggressive and unpleasant. It was as if the teacher was mocking the pupils, making fun of them and making them feel ashamed of their gender and sexuality.

Although this teacher projected herself as someone who is aware of the gender portrayals in the text, and of their importance, she did not attempt to develop this fully and she made no attempt to ask students for their opinions or encourage them to speak up or give a critical response to the gender roles portrayed in the text. During her interview she mentioned that she had attended a programme on gender in Dar es Salaam entitled TUSEME. This project was aimed at empowering Tanzanian girls to voice their concerns in public through drama. See <https://www.comminit.com/en/node/134090/38> last checked Dec. 09].

Class management

In mixed schools such as Schools B (urban city centre, government), C (rural, private/community school) and D (urban city centre, private/Islamic) it was difficult

for the teachers to encourage students to engage in discussion because of the large number of students. In these schools boys seemed to dominate the class as they were in the majority when raising their hands and answering questions, and the teacher seemed unperturbed by this situation. The interaction mode was rather teacher and boys than with the entire class. The boys seemed more open in expressing their ideas than the girls were, although the latter were given much fewer chances to respond throughout the lesson. In School D, the Islamic school for instance, the teacher occasionally posed questions to female students, who most of them sat shyly in the front rows of the class while the boys sat at the back. The boys' desks were connected together, making it impossible for the teacher to move amongst them and reach them. It was so noisy at the back of the class that the teacher had to constantly deal with the boys rather than the girls.

I asked the teacher in School D after the lesson why the girls seemed to be so unresponsive and why there had been no discussion of gender issues. He said the girls in the class were 'naturally' quiet and he did not want to appear to be 'harassing' them. When asked to clarify why he thought that he would 'harass' female students by asking them to respond to his questions, the teacher explained that in this Islamic school, female students were expected to follow certain patterns of behaviour such as not raising their voices in the school compounds and expressing their views in too forthright a manner. This notion was also mentioned during an interview with a male teacher in School B (a government mixed school) when he gave examples of the traditional social expectations of Muslim women.

He continued by saying that the poem had nothing to do with gender, and pointed out that because of the lack of time he could not deal with all the themes in the classroom, so it was for students themselves to uncover other emerging themes. He even suggested that if he were allowed to teach at weekends he could discuss the texts with his students in more depth¹⁵. He also pointed out that there are some restrictions on teachers using extra time, especially as it is a mixed Islamic school and parents would not approve of their daughters attending out of hours classes.

¹⁵ In Tanzania, it is sometimes the case that teachers provide additional tuition sessions for pupils out of hours classes or at the weekend either on unpaid or paid bases.

This particular teacher had an administrative role within the school as a result was extremely busy. For example, I myself witnessed how often he was interrupted by other members of staff who needed his help in situations outwith the classroom. Concerning the Islamic rules, it was revealed that all¹⁶ female pupils had to strictly follow the dress code by having long sleeved tops and long skirts with veils which covered their head, ears and neck, with only a small part of the face revealed. Male pupils were less restricted, wearing short sleeved shirts. In such warm weather as in Dodoma, Tanzania, boys' uniforms in School D allowed them to be more comfortable in class compared to the girls. The uniforms appeared to emphasise separate gender positions and particularly the need for female modesty. This may have reinforced girls' unwillingness to engage in discussion of gender issues, although I decided not to probe their feelings about their dresses since this would have been too intrusive. Likewise all female teachers were supposed to cover their heads.

In another school, School C, the majority of the students who responded to the teacher's questions were boys and this gave the impression that perhaps the girls had not read the texts. In general, the mode of teaching undertaken by some teachers relied very much on a teacher-centred approach, as in schools A, B and C where there were no small group discussions like in Schools D, E and F; or activities which involved students more. Group tasks were set as homework in these schools. The teachers mostly lectured, read from the text, wrote on the board and asked no open-ended questions to gather students' views and encourage creative interaction.

Moreover, the mode of teaching the teachers applied in the above schools was mainly non-activity based as they did most of the talking without giving enough time for discussion. The interaction seemed formal and students were quiet most of the time as they listened and jotted down what the teachers said or wrote on the board. In Schools A (rural, government, girls'), B (urban city centre, government, mixed) and C (rural, community school, mixed) nothing was done in pairs or groups and there were no question and answer sessions between the teachers and their students, except

¹⁶ This school admits non-Muslim students and employs non-Muslim teachers given that they conform to the dress code and other set Islamic rules in school.

when the teachers asked warm-up questions at the start of the lesson and brief questions during the presentation of the subject matter. In School A, for instance, only one girl asked a question about who the real owner of the ponds was as the text does not reveal this until the end. The teacher then posed that question to the class but nobody answered, and the teacher pursued it no further.

However, as discussed earlier, things were quite different in the most elite school, School E (outskirts of the city, private, mixed), where group work was undertaken and encouraged. The general atmosphere was very lively. The teacher wrote down the feedback given by students in their respective groups about their discussion. What was noticeable about this teacher, which was different from the others, was that he kept a very low profile in the classroom discussion and kept his involvement to a minimum. In this school, the teacher projected himself as a neutral, not siding with either group of girls or boys, but instead was just there to encourage and trigger the discussion. However, in this class students were more involved in oral work than in the reading of the text as that had been done on a previous occasion. There was also little writing carried out as there was a high level of spoken interaction between the students in groups, as well as teacher-to-student interaction. I was even asked by students on one or two occasions to give my opinion about the way female characters had been portrayed, but to avoid being a participant observer and in an effort to make my observation as objective as possible, I told them that I was happy to listen to them. They replied that I should visit them again so that I could share my opinions with them.

The impact of resource scarcity

All teachers missed opportunities, in different ways, in stimulating gender discussion. For instance, when students did not respond to teachers' question by just keeping silent the teacher would just point to another pupil to answer or move on with their prepared lesson plans. However, the main reason for lack of classroom discussion was that most time in class was spent reading aloud or telling the story. Engagement on gender issues such as the discussion described in School E was rare in other schools, partly because pupils did not have access to the books.

Generally, prior to teaching the themes, teachers would briefly introduce a text by giving some background information about the title, while others added some information from the introductory part of the text or the preface. Normally, the form of the text is what is used to introduce the lesson. As noted earlier, the content is central to the lesson and is a vital part of it.

In most schools observed, especially those schools which were just introducing the text as in Schools A, B and D, nothing significant was discussed about the title or about the author. The students were merely asked who the authors were and where they originated from. The title of the text was automatically associated with what the text was about. No discussion about the writers' biography or their point of view regarding gender relations in the text was alluded to. Teachers explained that they did not use any other sources to get more information about the texts or about the authors, apart from the literary texts and this narrowed down their own knowledge about the texts and therefore the discussion about the text showed reasoning based on limited information.

A teacher in school A, for instance, who was introducing the novel *The Great Ponds* by Amadi (1969), spent most of her time in narrating the story to the students. She began by asking them some introductory questions as about the author of the novel and his country of origin and what was the novel about whereas students chorused one word 'Ponds'. The teacher then narrated a summary of the plot and started to ask students about the themes found in the texts. Students responded by mentioning the themes which were written on the blackboard for discussion.

In school B, the teacher introduced the novel *Is It Possible?* by Ole-Kulet (1974), by asking one student after another to read aloud a portion from chapter one in front of the class then followed this up by asking questions such as: Who is the author? What is the chapter about? Who are the characters? Like other texts dealt with in other schools of the study's sample, *Is It Possible* possesses great potential for the discussion of gender issues. In this novel, the main character is male, who narrates his own journey motif for the quest of education and also features a number of males' adventures, whilst women remain firmly in the background (See Chapter

Four, Textual Analysis). The teacher explained later that he was obliged to read with students in class, no matter how long it would take; otherwise they would not get an opportunity to read and finish the texts because of insufficient copies.

After a brief introduction of the text, a teacher would go on to tell the students about the themes found in the text, or they would guide students to identify the themes. The following example from School D shows one class in which the teacher used a poem called *Development* by Kundi Faraja. Students in selected groups read out the whole poem, which had nine short stanzas, in chorus, each group reading one stanza, and then the teacher proceeded to ask questions about the dominant themes. At the end of the lesson there were other themes mentioned and discussed in class, such as disappointment, conflict, protest, corruption, betrayal and the selfishness of the leaders. This was the only class in the sample where position of women was not discussed on the day of observation and there was no mention of anything about gender, despite the fact that this could have been discussed if it had been introduced as a relevant theme. As the class had a mixture of girls and boys, the teacher could well have initiated a fruitful discussion about gender images in the poem. Although the teacher had a good command of English and did his best to encourage students to speak up, he was too quick to provide the students with his own answers.

Given the fact that most of these schools do not even have enough basic texts books, teachers invariably resort to teaching orally and by lecture. Regrettable shortcomings such as these deter teachers from engaging in the appropriate small group discussions in class that would add so much to the development of their students. Examples have been drawn in this chapter from different schools in the sample as to how they struggled with the issue of materials.

So far, I have reported on observations of teachers' handling of gender issues in the lesson. To summarise, there was little discussion because most teachers adopted a teaching style based on instruction rather than dialogue. A female deficit approach was adopted, with few opportunities for pupils to critique masculinity. On the rare occasion where pupils did have the opportunity to discuss representations of gender is in School E, the discussion was not handled skilfully. In particular, the use of

single sex groups tended to encourage polarised responses. I now turn to pupils' views of the texts they studied in terms of their treatment of masculinity and femininity and the way teachers handled them in classrooms.

Students' views of teachers' commitment and competence

Findings reveal that there was no significant difference in the first responses of students from urban and rural government schools regarding whether or not they received enough assistance from teachers to help them make sense of the texts in terms of gender representation. All students answered in the first place that they received assistance from their teachers. However, later on there was a mismatch in responses in the course of discussing the same issue during interviews, as some students complained about receiving only a little assistance from teachers. Since the question was clearly asked, one explanation for this mismatch could be that perhaps they said their teachers helped them to understand the books better because they either thought that was the answer the researcher wanted to be given, or perhaps they were unsure whether their response would be made known to their teachers.

Students in both rural and urban schools felt that teachers did not adequately support them to engage with the texts. For instance, students in School C (rural, community school, mixed) complained that there was not sufficient time for discussion and also their literature teacher was not available to be consulted out of class. This was because the teacher often had numerous literature classes to teach. For example, in School C there were only two English teachers to teach both linguistics and literature through Form One to Form Four. Each form has a minimum of three streams. Moreover, teachers explained during informal conversation that they have also had to engage in other activities to supplement their meagre salaries. This situation sometimes forced them to be unavailable for some classes.

Students also added that their teacher was not competent in teaching the texts and did not know the texts well enough. Another student in the same school complained of the teacher's approach:

Samuel: The teacher normally makes an analysis of one text only and leaves the rest to us. But texts differ; we would need the teacher's assistance in each text.

Another student added:

Jonasi: The way we do the analysis by ourselves is different from when we are given assistance by the teacher; who would challenge us on the way we interpret the texts (students in School C, rural community school, lower economic status 13.2.2009).

The problem of not receiving adequate support from the teacher was not just peculiar to rural schools. Urban government schools, like Schools B (mixed) and F (boys' school), had similar views, but put them in a slightly different way. Although they said their teachers were competent in teaching [teacher in School F was a university graduate, whilst the teacher in School B is a diploma holder and had embarked on a degree programme], they complained that their teachers deliberately 'did not show enough effort to help during teaching'. This was because teachers explicitly wanted students to attend their extra classes conducted after the normal school hours or over the weekends, these classes in Tanzania are famously known as 'tuition' classes; the same students (as these ones I interviewed) would pay money to the same teacher or other teachers in other schools to attend extra lessons where teachers deal with topics in detail. Moreover, students complained that their teachers purposely did not exercise enough effort during classes, so that students would find it necessary to purchase from the teachers the pamphlets and handouts on the texts that teachers had prepared. According to the students, this was what most teachers in both urban and rural schools meant by seeking other means to supplement their salaries - to the detriment of their students' classroom learning. The problem is more severe in rural schools such as A (girls' school) and C (mixed) where students had no access to tuition classes and relied entirely on classroom assistance. Both teachers in Schools A and C hold the Diploma in Teaching. However, students in Schools D and E said that they were content with the way their teachers helped them to understand gender representation in the texts.

Students' views of representations of masculinity and femininity in the texts

Overall, students observed that most texts presented women as 'oppressed' and 'humiliated'. They felt that women were humiliated by traditions such as polygamy since it creates a sense of inferiority and fosters female enmity, whilst it is considered as a sign of prestige to men both in the texts and in real life. In some texts such as *Things Fall Apart* students felt that this was presented uncritically as part of African culture.

Students maintained that women were mostly portrayed negatively as weak characters that do not stand by their own opinions; they do not have leading positions in society or opportunities to attend school. They tended to play subservient roles and were generally disadvantaged in the division of labour.

In the pre-feminist literature from the 1950s and 1960s, students observed a tendency of writers to present this as inevitable, whereas more recent texts such as *Passed Like a Shadow* were clearly inviting a more critical reading of gender power relations.

Students' interpretation of the texts' underpinning morality

Across the schools, some pupils, but not all, had some sense that the texts had been selected in order for them to learn principles of ethical behaviour. They did not read the books as merely depicting aspects of African life in an objective manner. They argued that there were important social messages in the texts, such as the importance of education as exemplified through the characters of Remi in Ngugi's *The Black Hermit*, and Juliette in Mbia's *Three Suitors, One Husband*. Students in School D (urban, private, mixed, mostly middle class) praised Remi, saying that the education he had received helped to raise political awareness among his people. He joined the Africanist Party and became an active leader and through his commitment to his country and the confidence he had acquired from his formal education he was able to challenge the religious beliefs and selfishness of the traditional leaders. Remi's boldness helped him to fight racism and tribalism which was acute in his home country of Kenya, and succeeded in uniting people of different faiths and ideological backgrounds.

Some students hailed women who stood up for their rights, like Juliette, who used any way possible to ensure she did not have to marry someone who was not of her choice. And although her family members discouraged her in pursuing secondary education simply because she was a girl, she still pressed forward. Unlike all the women in *Three suitors*, *One Husband*, Juliette was described by students as bold, confident, and decisive, while some students described her as ‘stubborn’, a trait which they said girls should have in such situations as Juliette’s, as when family members exerted pressure on her to marry someone not of her own choice. For them, stubbornness equalled boldness.

Students also contended that there are some traditions that should be abandoned - such as that of female genital mutilation, as revealed in Ngugi’s *The River Between*, where a girl undergoes the process and dies from bleeding; and that of early and arranged marriages of boys and girls. The culture of inheriting widows, as experienced by Thoni in *The Black Hermit* was described by a boy in School C (rural, community, mixed, socially disadvantaged) as a ‘dangerous culture’. This boy explained how this culture still persists in his home town where widows are forced by their in-laws to re-marry a relative of their own deceased husband, or else face being chased out of the house, and leaving the children on their own. He added:

... it is unbelievable that someone would be willing to inherit a widow when they do not know what caused her husband’s death...it could be AIDS! But these things still happen in our village in – [mentions the name of the village and region] (A boy in School C, 13.2.2009).

Pupils’ views of the didactic nature of literature were evident in all the schools. In School E, for instance, students used *Passed Like a Shadow*, to clearly and effectively comment:

Kate: *Passed Like a Shadow* is very metaphorical. It uses the football star character nicknamed Fort Portal Bullet to symbolise life as a game...play it safely. The tragic ending of the story reveals how he played roughly, only to destroy his own life.

Rebecca: The play also warns us not to be like Adyeri, his father, who abused power (Students in School E, socially advantaged students – upper class, elite school/an academy, private school, 23.2.2009).

A similar assertion was put forward by a student in School D:

Abdi (boy): When those bad characters end up in a terrible situation we know for sure that the author wants us to learn not to be like them and also the vice-versa.

Boys in School F used *Three Suitors, One Husband* commented:

Ali: They say 'old is gold'. Although this play was written a long time ago there are still some lessons to be learned out of it, for example, the way women are treated is not different to many families in Tanzania...girls are not given freedom to choose their partners and they are used as a source of income through dowry. The playwright here exposes this culture and wants us to change...if men are free to choose their partners, so are women (Boys in School F, urban city centre, government, mixed school, middle class students).

Another boy observed:

Edward: ...although nowadays things are a bit different as many people are educated and they would allow their daughters to choose partners...But I think women are wrong to demand 'favour' and special seats in the parliament as if they were special groups like children, or so on. They should seek to get equal treatment because all humans are equal.

Michael: In our family...at home we don't treat women in the same way as in *Three Suitors, One Husband* though...

Ali: ...but things like this still happen...especially in the villages (Boys in School F, urban city centre, government, mixed school, middle class students 26.3.2009).

Some of the students appeared to have a more critical view of African society with regard to gender and inequality than their teachers. However, they were prone and open to guidance from teachers in interpreting the texts.

Students' attitudes to the tradition of the bride price

While boys argued against dowry paying, the girls had different views and they contributed much to this topic. On some occasions, girls were more likely to defend traditional practices than boys. The book *Three Suitors, One Husband* prompted discussion of the bride price tradition with pupils in School A (rural, girls' school)

during group interview all four girls said that they would not be willing to get married before a full dowry was paid to their parents. They maintained:

Siri: It is our culture that parents should be given something as a way of appreciating the good job they have done of raising me up. So if my fiancé does not like to pay the dowry, I would take it as not showing respect to my parents.

Jemima: Yes, it is like saying 'thank you' to parents, not really paying for the wife...

Hawa: It is also a sign of seriousness of the man.

Emilia: A man will be more committed to his wife if he paid off the price than if he does not (Female students in School A, girls' school, socially disadvantaged students, rural school, 26.1.2009).

The idea of the dowry being seen as an expression of appreciation was also confirmed by the Gender Desk official (See Chapter Five) who described it as a 'token' to parents.

In School C (rural, mixed school, socially disadvantaged) girls talked of their fears in terms of what society would say if they agreed to marry without a bride price.

Tausi (girl): ...but if people hear that I agreed to marry before my parents received any dowry ... I will be considered as an easy-going girl.

Kesia (a girl): if you go to him before the dowry is paid, people will assume that you have got problems at your home and you just seek refuge in the man.....in fact, nobody among his people will ever respect you as a legitimate wife.

Jonas (a boy): But it will depend. Other parents will appreciate that, especially when they cannot afford to pay the dowry...or in some cases, if the bride would help her fiancée to pay off the price...it's great! (Students in School C, mixed, community, rural, socio-economically poor, 13.2.2009).

Asked to elaborate on their comments, students in School C explained that it was common to have girls who would help their fiancées pay off the bride price to ensure that the marriage would go ahead.

Girls in School D were of the same opinion that the views of society were pertinent to the whole issue of bride pricing, and often seen as an obstacle to its abolition. In

School E, the more affluent school, girls talked more about respect within the couple. According to them, they would be willing to marry without any dowry payment being paid, as long as both were in love with each other. For them, this was the most important point, but they warned that African men were the biggest problem as they would not respect a wife for whom they had not paid a dowry. Regarding this, one can say that there were similar responses from all schools as students, especially girls, thought that the dowry brings a kind of commitment and seriousness to the marriage relationship.

With regard to the fear of society amongst those who would marry without a dowry, it is surprising to note how girls in the 21st century would argue similarly to those girls portrayed in the fiction of five decades ago. For example, in Soyinka's play, *The Lion and the Jewel*, the theme of marriage is placed at the heart of the play in order to debate, among other themes, the issue of the bride price, which most students described as still being of great significance. The play is about a girl called Sidi, who insists that a full dowry should be paid in order that she can marry the village teacher, Lakunle. However, Lakunle is seeking to change this tradition by vowing to marry Sidi without a single coin being exchanged, his argument being that the bride price demeans the woman and reduces her to a commodity, and not a life partner. In the main, however, the students sympathised with Sidi's stance, giving as their reason many of the arguments mentioned above. Undoubtedly, the bride price remains an issue in today's East African societies, as revealed as recently as 2006 in Mapalala's *Passed Like a Shadow*. In this novel, Vicky is denied her right to marry the man she loves, Akena, simply because her uncle and Akena could not reach a consensus on the dowry. Adyeri, who is portrayed as a greedy man, demands cows and cash in exchange for Vicky, but it is a price that Akena cannot afford.

According to what is revealed in this chapter it can be argued that although many students seem to reject stereotypical representations of gender in the texts, there is enough evidence to suggest that there is still a problem in students' mindsets about the way they perceive and respond to the gender roles of women and men in society. The students who remarked that the character of Juliette is exaggerated exemplify this. They believed that Juliette had been portrayed as overconfident, more so than

real girls in everyday life would be, and therein lies a problem. It is also the case that most girls in the sample, from all schools, whether urban or rural, concurred with the idea of the dowry. In addition, and more pointedly, they put forward the same arguments as girls did in the 1960s such as Sidi in *The Lion and the Jewel*, as reflected in the texts that were published fifty years ago. These factors suggest that culture takes a long time to change, but it does change. Yet, the classroom interactions in the six observed schools, to the great extent, were hampered by the fact that teachers missed so many opportunities found in the texts to trigger gender discussions.

Students' favourite text and views of positive representations of women

It was striking to discover that the majority of students, boys and girls, in all schools chose the play *Three Suitors, One Husband* as their favourite text. It was revealed that this text had been read by the majority of students in each school visited - whether the text had already been taught in class or not. As it was revealed during discussions, students alluded to the point that the text reflected the reality of rural life in Africa where women are responsible for much agricultural production. They also liked the text's amusing style.

Although the play *Three Suitors, One Husband* is set in Cameroon, students saw it as being relevant to today's East African context in a country like Tanzania.

Economically, for instance, students in School A argued that the majority of Tanzanians still depend on small scale agriculture as their main source of food and income, as illustrated in the play. Also, women are the main producers in the farms, especially in rural Tanzania, and this is also demonstrated in the text. Moreover, girls in School A talked of how Juliette's success symbolised the cultural change in issues related to women's decision making. They argued that cultural change and gender equality could be brought about by women, particularly by those who have gone to school, like Juliette.

Students' criticisms of negative representations of women

A few students felt that the texts selected for study presented in over-victimised view of women, although they were aware of the imbalance of power between males and females. A boy in School B, explained:

There are communities in our society where women are more powerful than men, but this fact has not been portrayed in most of our texts, and I suggest that authors should also change the way they write their books by showing the other side of the coin (A student in School B, urban, middle class 30.1.2009).

A girl in the same group agreed, saying that, at home, it was her mother who kept the money and that they (the children) had witnessed their father asking for money from her. This point stimulated a lively discussion on whether or not the father had asked for money because he was dependent on his wife's earnings or to what extent was keeping the money a power thing for the woman. At the end, the four students concluded that it is true that some women are, in fact, more powerful in reality than in the way they are portrayed in many texts as being weak and voiceless. Other examples were given about the strong women portrayed in Ngugi's plays, especially widows such as Njango in Ngugi's plays *This Time Tomorrow*, and Nyobi in *The Black Hermit*. Nyobi was left alone, first by her husband when he died, and then by their son who died unexpectedly. Then Remi fled to town, leaving her with Thoni to look after. Njango's husband was killed in the forest during the *Mau Mau Uprising*¹⁷ and was left with her children, Wanjiro, and her brother, to look after. These women are portrayed as being strong and independent, and were described by students as 'heroes', portraying the reality of many African women, and widows in particular. These women have to struggle throughout their lives as they strive to give their children a good upbringing. However, during the interviews, some of the girls noted that Njago had the same patriarchal mentality when the opportunity for education arose. She chose to send her son to school, leaving Wanjiro, the sister, to a life of abject poverty in the Kenyan slums.

¹⁷The Mau Mau Uprising was a Kenyan freedom fighters' movement in the early 1950s. This was anti-colonialism group but which was defeated in mid 1950s after their leader, Dedan Kimathi was captured.

Students in School C, which is a mixed school, disapproved of the way women like Nyobi and her mother-in-law had been portrayed in Ngugi's play *The Black Hermit*. They observed:

Tausi (a girl): I think it is inappropriate the way Thoni has been portrayed; she is crying all the time...she has never argued against anything imposed upon her, including being inherited by her brother-in-law, Remi, soon after her husband's death. I think the book shows us girls as people who cannot speak up, just crying all the time – which is not true.

Jonasi (a boy): And Nyobi, Remi's mother, does not take a firm stand. She is swayed and gets influenced by everybody: by the pastor who wants her to follow Christianity, and by the village elders who want her to follow the African traditional beliefs. She is not stable (Students in School C, rural community school, socio-economically poor, 13.2.2009).

Boys and girls were critical of the practice of favouring boys' education over that of girls as depicted in a number of texts. They recognised this as an ongoing feature of Tanzania society, but felt it was unjust. For example, in the School B group interview, pupils said that they felt that female characters Wanjiro in Ngugi's novel *This Time Tomorrow* was treated unjustly. While her brother was sent to school, Wanjiro was left to carry out the domestic work and also to help out her mother in her small food vending business. On the same point, students in School E, a mixed school, gave the example of Vicky in Mapalala's *Passed Like a Shadow*, who did not get an opportunity to attend school. This led to her downfall as she sought to earn a living through selling her body. Students thought that the story represented the life as it is although they did not think that it should be like that.

In School A, a girls' school, the girls raised the issue of taboos in *Three Suitors, One Husband*, claiming that only women were prescribed with food taboos. For example, they were not allowed to eat the meat of particular animals, although young men were given special permission to eat the forbidden food. The women were not even given a good reason for this restriction.

In all these cases, the pupils felt that the writers were accurately identifying ways in which African societies disempowered women.

Students' awareness of the authors' standpoint

As noted earlier, the students believed that the texts had lessons for them to learn or emulate but also recognised the authors' standpoint. For instance, in School D (urban city centre, private, mixed), a boy argued that the character of Juliette was somewhat exaggerated as she is drawn as being 'too overconfident' to compare with girls in real life. But other students responded as follows:

Abdi (boy): I think it is the author's belief that in reality some girls are extraordinarily overconfident like Juliette.

Bahati (boy): The author here asks 'is it possible to have such girls in society?' In my opinion the character of Juliette is too fictitious to believe.

Alice (girl): The author affirms that it is possible to have such girls in society, which is true (School D, urban, middle class students, 16.2.2009).

In School E (the most elite school, private, mixed), students discussed the characters of Lawino and Ocol, and concluded that they represented the poet's personal views about the way he viewed the differences between cultures by describing their two parallel characters: Lawino, who is a strong upholder of African tradition, on the one hand; and her husband, Ocol, on the other hand, who upholds the foreign culture he has assimilated through his acquisition of a formal education while outside the country. Students argued that through the two characters, the poet, P'Bitek, is able to explore numerous topics: Christianity versus the African belief in ancestry; traditional medicine versus modern medicine; and an exploration of the concepts of civilization and education.

Summary and conclusion

This chapter focused on an analysis of the teachers' classroom practices and students' views. It sought to address the research question of this study: *How is gender addressed in the process of teaching and learning literature in the Tanzanian secondary school classroom context?* Results were presented and discussed with particular focus on how teachers mediate the set literary texts with regard to the representation of gender as was observed in the classroom context. Students' interviews were used to explore their interpretation of the representations of gender

in the texts. The chapter has discussed the way in which teachers mediated texts in relation to their construction of gender relations and the way in which students responded to the texts.

Overall, although teachers were obliged to address the theme of women in society, this was under-developed in most schools for a variety of reasons. In government schools in particular, there was a severe shortage of resources so that the teacher spent most time in class reading the book or getting the students to read aloud. The teachers tended to adopt an instructional rather than exploratory approach, with a major focus on the examinations. Many of the teachers interviewed had rather traditional and conservative views on gender, and they generally did not use the opportunities provided in the texts to encourage students to address critical gender issues in African societies.

In School E, for example, the most affluent school, there was more discussion due to the smaller class size and availability of the texts. However, the use of single sex groups was not helpful in encouraging girls and boys to talk about social and cultural factors contributing to the transmission of HIV/AIDS. In School D, the Islamic school, the teacher was reluctant to encourage girls to express critical views on traditional gender relationships because this was seen as culturally inappropriate.

Group interviews revealed that pupils were able to engage critically with gender representations within the texts, even if they were not given the opportunity to do so in class. Girls and boys were aware of the inequalities in African societies with regard to issues such as access to education. Interestingly, girls were sometimes more willing to defend traditional practices such as paying of a bride price.

Overall, pupils recognised the validity of many of the portrayals of women as weak and passive, but they preferred the more positive messages of a text such as *Three Suitors*, *One Husband*, which recognises women's positive contributions to African society, particularly in agriculture. However, pupils' potential to tackle the literary texts critically was clearly hampered by the teaching methodology adopted by their teachers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

‘...The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods’ (CEDAW, 1979: Article 10c).

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the main findings and the key emerging themes in this study, to draw together a conclusion arising from the findings, and to consider the future implications of the study. The structure of the chapter is as follows: first, the introduction and the contextual background regarding the purpose of the study are described briefly, followed by an analysis of the implications of the study for policy and practice and the challenges regarding gender equality in secondary schools in Tanzania. A summary of key issues that emerged from the study is then outlined. Following the research described in the previous chapters, the study has suggested the kind of interventions and changes that might be undertaken in the teaching, curriculum design, and policy making in the literature curriculum in secondary schools in Tanzania. These are stated in the section on recommendations. I also consider the limitations of the study. The chapter ends by drawing out a conclusion.

The purpose of the study

The study aimed to analyse gender representations in Tanzanian literature. Its main goals were as follows: 1) to explore gender representations in the English literature texts used in Tanzanian secondary schools; 2) to examine how the texts are selected; how these texts are mediated by teachers; and how they are received and interpreted by students; 3) to investigate the key actors’ perceptions of these gendered images and their significance in shaping the political, social and economic culture of Tanzania. I wanted to examine the extent to which pupils were being encouraged to

examine their society critically through the lens of gender representations in literary texts.

Implications of the study for policy and practice, and the challenges in Tanzania in relation to gender equality in secondary schools

This chapter draws strength from the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW's) stance, that the eradication of stereotypes, in both resources and methods of teaching and learning process, is paramount if the goal of achieving gender equality is to be successful.

In light of the evidence presented, it is clear that the present government is keen to achieve the Millennium Development Goal Three, but more must be done to achieve it; especially on the level of gender equality in which girls encounter in classroom interactions. Since educational policies and circulars are stated at a general macro level, tackling gender inequalities in the future will require educational practitioners, such as teachers, to fully participate in the process. Tanzania will need sustained efforts over the next ten years to promote gender equality and to empower women in education. It is one of the outcomes of this study that the problem here is not one of correct policy formulation, but rather one of practice at the micro level, not only in schools but also in classroom practices. In fact, the National Women Development and Gender Policy in Tanzania is well stated:

It calls for rectification of the historic gender imbalance through removing barriers that hinder women from having access to education and training to the limits of their abilities, as well as removing socio-cultural barriers including norms, values and social cultural practices that continue to subordinate women in inferior social, economic and political positions (Shao and Mukangara, 2008).

Indeed, one of the challenges facing Tanzania is not only the practices, but also the need to transform traditional norms, culture, and social structures which shape women's lives. This chapter outlines some of the challenges which bar the government and educational stakeholders from achieving the equality goal, despite the well articulated policies.

As noted in Chapter One (See Unterhalter's contrasting frameworks of gender understandings), there appears to be a lack of understanding in Tanzania about what gender equality might involve culturally, socially and politically. In this sense, any attempt to solve the problem of gender inequalities in education should start by understanding what the term 'equality' may entail, in relation to education. As a result of the imprecise understanding of the term, much has been left unsaid about the classroom practice aspect in Tanzania. Instead, the government has been striving to ensure gender parity in schools. Tackling gross enrolment, in terms of number of the girls in schools, has been the *raison d'être* for gender issues in Tanzania.

While gender parity is an important milestone towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, the focus on getting equal enrolment numbers of boys and girls in schools can overshadow the problems related to teaching and learning process in classrooms. These include teachers' attitudes and their relationship with students, what girls encounter in classroom interactions and the general engagement with the texts. Such engagement is necessary to ensure that women can achieve basic human rights: such as the right to education, the right to choose a life partner, the right to express an opinion, the right to pursue their own dreams in life, to participate in social, economic and political activities, and the like. However, although such changes are necessary, they remain difficult to achieve. Thus, teaching for transformation is at the heart of this inquiry.

If education officials and planners are serious about achieving the gender goal by the year 2015, teachers will urgently need training on how to include gender issues in the complex teaching-learning process. This has to bear in mind the realities of classrooms in most Tanzanian schools, and the scarcity of teaching resources and the large number of students in classes (as demonstrated in Chapter Five). Good teaching is not an inborn attribute and cannot be mandated; rather, a teacher has to learn the skill, nurture it, and update the skills over time. If teachers are well trained and receive on-going in-service courses, their teaching methodology will be geared to and suited to achieving the ambitious MDG Three goal.

There is a need for teacher education to help teachers develop better classroom practices. So they are less reliant on whole group teaching from the front and use a

more eclectic mix of classroom organisation strategies, with a focus on group work. This is likely to assist pupils to develop the critical and analytical skills which are essential for their future lives.

Meanwhile the Tanzanian curriculum designers are facing an essential task to develop the curriculum based on an understanding of gender issues, taking into consideration the learning needs of both boys and girls in classroom interactions. The possible trend in literary discourse in Tanzanian secondary schools over the next ten years is that which rejects the passivity of the audience. Teachers and students using the literary texts should be seen as active and gender responsive readers.

Challenging the different notions which are expressed without taking them for granted; they should also be empowered to question the 'natural' representations portrayed in their society. In so doing, they will be seen as active agents who are somehow able to take control of their own lives, despite the often symbolic injustices inflicted upon them.

In general, the findings of this study, as revealed in previous chapters, show that Tanzanian girls and boys clearly have great potential to engage critically with discussion about the position of women in African societies and the cultures which underpin inequality. However, this potential is not sufficiently or fully developed in Tanzanian secondary school classrooms (See Chapter Six). This is partly due to the lack of resources and lack of orientation of teachers in regard to gender issues; but also a lack of awareness amongst Tanzanian teachers and the reluctance to engage fully in critical discussions with their pupils about gender issues and the future direction of Tanzanian society has an impact. Therefore, more needs to be done in terms of ensuring that the teachers are better equipped in regard to training and resources. If Tanzania has to achieve the gender goal, then enough resources should be invested toward education, in terms of financing teacher-training courses which include pre-service and in-service curricula.

Further, this study establishes a discussion on gender representation in literary texts. In future, the discussion should not be based solely on an approach, which propounds that a work of art is a mirror that should reflect reality without necessarily critiquing those realities. Rather a more nuanced reading which includes Feminist and

Postcolonial approaches need to be adopted in the course of analyzing the texts in classrooms (See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion about the approaches).

Moreover, the discussion about gender should also not be based on female characters only, as it is now with the theme 'the position of women in society'. Rather, students and teachers should look at a text as a cultural product, so what is important is the interaction between the reader and text. Teachers of literature need to develop more sophisticated understandings of texts as a cultural product, so they can transmit these concepts to pupils.

Since the Tanzanian syllabus for secondary schools emphasises the reading and analysing of literary texts as necessary activities to improve language skills and literary criticism (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2005), it is important to make teachers aware of the classroom implications attached to the teaching of literature, particularly with regard to the elimination of gender inequalities. The argument put forward is that although education as a system and literature in particular as a subject, will not alone ensure the promotion of gender equality. The researcher considers literature as an important variable, among many, to bring about change in the near future. This is because literature uses language as 'a powerful medium through which the world is both reflected and constructed' (Litosseliti 2006: 13), whereby authors portray and create social realities using characters and language to suit the messages intended for the audience. Literary texts have the potential for exposing the contradiction, and specifically the oppressive gender relations within societies, as demonstrated in some of the texts analysed in Chapter Four.

The implication of analysing these texts in the next ten years relies on the fact texts instil and shape students' perceptions, concepts, expectations and beliefs about who they are and what their roles in society are. Students position themselves with the characters portrayed or constructed in terms of gender. It is also clear some books reinforce the stereotypes which are held in societies about gender, and thus are influential books.

As it stands now, *all* of the literary texts, as they appear in the current list at the Ordinary level of secondary education in Tanzania, are written by males (see the list in Chapter Four). This may explain something significant regarding gender in the

education system in Tanzania. It is one of the 'many facets of girls' educational experiences that remain negatively affected by masculinist values and expectations' (Francis and Skelton 2001). However, I am aware that both male and female writers shape both girls' and boys' views about both girls and boys. In view of this, my study relies on the concept of active readers who interact with the texts in which they read; thus, they are not just passive recipients to male (or female) representation.

It is a particular aim of this study to stress the importance of including works by female authors in the secondary school literature list to help strike a fairer balance between the sexes in order to counter some of the more traditional representations of gender described in Chapter Four. However, this does not assume all female writers are progressive, feminist writers in particular would meet the needs of the modern audience. This would ensure greater diversity in author standpoint. For instance, although Amamanda Ngozi Adichie in the novel the *Purple Hibiscus* portrays Beatrice, the mother of the main character, Kambili, as a traditional housewife who is controlled and occasionally abused by her husband Eugene, it is Beatrice, who, at the end, is empowered and re-gains her voice. Above all, the author gives the audience a distinctively modern character to think about in the shape of Aunt Ifeoma. Ifeoma is a university lecturer. She is an intelligent, powerful and independent woman who had brought up her own children as a single mother. She even advises Beatrice to leave her husband, who is her own brother, in order to experience independence. Ifeoma firmly believes that Beatrice's freedom from humiliation and abuse can come from the recognition and understanding that having a husband is not the only way to progress through life, as Beatrice believes. Aunt Ifeoma demonstrates what women are capable of doing in their own lives, if given the chance to, or if they are strong enough to decide for themselves.

Meanwhile, there is a need to show greater transparency in the way some authors are included on the list, while others are excluded. This is especially the case, since it was revealed in this study, that the Educational Materials Approval Committee team often confers with publishers in the process of the evaluation and selection of texts (see Chapter Five). It may be the case that the publishing industry in Tanzania could be more inclined to business and profit, rather than the educational benefits which can be derived by the students of such texts; therefore, any discussion with

publishers and their representatives should be expected to be biased towards profit, rather than towards educational priorities.

The last vital aspect which requires attention, if the gender goal is to be achieved in Tanzania, is a co-working strategy for the same good cause among different parties concerned. These include the government, academicians, politicians, activists, educational officials, curriculum planners and teachers. They are responsible for advocacy, lobbying, policy planning and implementation. Together, they can effect the desired practical changes and transform the system for the betterment of the country. Moreover, transforming education policy and practice, for gender equality, requires the parties concerned to realise the need to integrate gender concerns with the whole notion of development of the country. Talking about gender equality not only directs attention to the more obvious issues related to gender stereotypes, gender based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights or traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, early pregnancies and marriages, but also to yet another urgent issue of women's economic empowerment. Indeed, the gender equality goal has a direct relationship to the country's priority issues in development: such as democracy, human rights, poverty reduction and good governance. Gender equality has entered the debate on such issues due to its cross-cutting nature. Therefore, one of the challenges of education in Tanzania is to ensure the teaching and learning processes in all subjects are related to wider context of socio-cultural, political and economic change, especially in the global economic crisis.

As Tanzanian society moves from one stage of history to another, tremendous changes occur. During such transitions some changes in cultural norms and values are inevitable, including a society's views and perceptions about gender representation. Thus, everything in that society's education system is required to change in order to reflect and drive the current situation.

Summary of key findings

Gender representation in the literary texts

There are clearly differences in understandings of gender within literary texts used in Tanzanian secondary school classes. There are those of the 1950s and 1960s such as *Things Fall Apart*, *The Great Ponds*, *Three Suitors One Husband*, and *The Lion and*

the Jewel, and those of the postcolonial era like *Passed Like a Shadow*. These differences are very evident if comparisons are made between the former texts and the latter. For example, *Things Fall Apart* seeks to represent African culture with a western audience in mind, describing rather than critiquing its all-pervasive culture of violent masculinity. *Passed Like a Shadow* on the other hand, is also depicting the consequences of male dominance and cultural practices which lead to the sexual exploitation of women. Unlike *Things Fall Apart*, *Passed Like a Shadow* is inviting the reader to criticise such practices and the traditional gender relations.

In addition to their economic and sexual oppression, in the pre-feminist texts such as *Things Fall Apart* and *The Great Ponds*, women's voices are not heard. Readers are rarely allowed to get inside women's heads in order to explore their feelings, opinions. Despite the fact that writers such as Achebe, Amadi and Soyinka were not writing from a feminist perspective, there are possibilities for teachers to mediate and communicate such texts to their students in a way which permits the development of a gender critique of African societies. Here is where classroom interaction becomes central to dealing with gender issues in the educational context and especially in the teacher-student relationship. It is an argument of this study that these texts could be used by teachers to stimulate gender discussion in classrooms.

Considering the texts analysed in Chapter Four, it was noted that at least some of the authors under discussion were aiming to expose the social realities of the times and to explore the gender issues at the heart of African culture. However, given the gender portrayals described in these texts, which often present men as dominant and women as subservient, teachers of literature have to be sensitive in their presentation of the texts, particularly in the case of the secondary students in Forms Three and Four who use these books.

Boys and girls are likely to develop clear understandings of gender issues in their families and through other social institutions, even before they come to school. However, literary texts make a significant contribution to the constructions of masculinity and femininity and may be used to challenge pupils' received ideas. In addition, in order to justify the importance of literature, a Zimbabwean writer, Hove

(2002), argues that a country's genuine history is not found in history books, but rather lies in its literary writings. Although Hove's view may seem extreme, it can be justified by the school of thought that any work of art is a part and product of society and therefore may be used to develop a critical understanding of that society (See the section of Sociology of Literature in Chapter Two in this thesis).

Clearly, literary texts alone cannot transform a society. However, the way teachers mediate those texts to students is of great importance and can contribute to the cultural underpinnings of social change. The next section elaborates on this point.

Further, officials and teachers, in general, had similar views about the question at hand. Many described the gender portrayals in the majority of texts as imbalanced where women are portrayed with more negative and stereotypical traits than men. Teachers, in particular, described the gender representation imbalance as that of women being 'oppressed' and 'humiliated'. They argued that the portrayals reflect the way society is and most of them were of the opinion that the authors aimed at criticising the reality rather than supporting.

Moreover, officials and teachers also agreed that books do have an influence on readers: for instance, the Inspectorate official argued that those who start reading at an early age are highly influenced because they take everything that is written as correct, without having the faculties at that age to review texts more critically. Teachers, however, had more knowledge of the texts than the officials who select the books.

Teachers' lack of skill in promoting critical discussion with the texts

One of the most striking features noted often during classroom observation was the lack of critical engagement with the books, whereby the traditional messages offered by the literary texts were not critiqued by teachers or students. This was not only because of the 'Position of Women' was seen as the gender theme, as pointed out in this study, but because of the opportunities which teachers missed to critique the texts (See Chapter Six). Five teachers out of the six observed discussed the theme 'Position of Women', and explained during their interviews that this was the gender

theme. As pointed out in Chapter Six, the discussion centred on female characters, but without critiquing their socio-economic positions. Very little attention was paid to the author's construction of dominant masculinities in Tanzanian society.

When there were opportunities to explore the gender issues in class using the books' episodes, teachers tended to close down the discussion. Moreover, in most cases there were no small group discussions; teachers tended to teach from the front and read the books most of the time or leave some passages to be read out by individual student in front of the class. In case of School E which used lively group discussion, it was noted that the grouping practice of girls versus boys was not successful because it hampered critical analysis between the girls' and boys' positions.

Most teachers and students appeared to have had not considered the texts in depth. They were of the opinion that the gender images that appear in most literary texts reflect social reality, but they were not always aware of invitations to critique this reality. They explained that the gender portrayals described are rather imbalanced in that the images of women are not positively represented and said that they would have preferred more positive representations of women. They maintained that, historically, women have been relegated to domestic duties such as housework, child bearing and rearing, and field production work such as agriculture. They drew vivid examples of these tasks from the texts and their view is that the texts reflect much of what exists in society today, and that little has changed.

Although teachers agreed that they are responsible for mediating the texts to their students and carrying out interpretations of the texts during teaching, they argued, however, that there are other issues related to making the teaching and learning process of gender representations: argued that their methodology was not the only issue which affects the teaching and learning process. For example, they spoke about the acute problem of teaching resources and large classes in Tanzania, which is a situation that teachers have to tolerate. They claimed that when they complained to the authority about this they were told to be creative in classes and improvise with the materials they had available.

The next section elaborates the process of selecting the literary texts by Tanzanian education officials.

The process of selecting literary texts

As well as giving their views on gender representations in the texts, teachers and officials were also asked about the process of selecting the texts and the way in which they participated in policy formulation as far as the teaching of African literature in English is concerned. The findings reveal that those [education officials] selecting the texts were often ill informed and unaware of the social and cultural significant of this task.

While teachers were said to be implementers of most educational policies, it was revealed that they were generally not involved directly in the planning of the policy, or in choosing the literary texts and that there was a great deal of confusion between the policy makers' role and the mechanism to involve teachers in evaluating the texts, or even in just giving their views and suggestions about the texts. For example, the 'English Subject Panel' includes officials from the Ministry and the Institute of Education, as explained earlier. Even the Secondary Education representative is not a teacher from a school, but rather an official in the Secondary Education Department of the Ministry, while those described as 'professional teachers' by the Educational Materials Approval Committee official were, in fact, former teachers just like the Inspectorate official and the curriculum planner who participated in this study. Indeed, their former teaching experience had ended some years previously, and so they could hardly be said to be genuinely representing teachers. The Tanzania Institute of Education official (curriculum planner) admitted this limitation in not involving teachers fully by saying: 'This is a problem; teachers do not get a direct opportunity to give their views about the texts. I think there should be some way or channel to enable them to go straight to the authorities'. Results from teachers' interviews have attested to this claim as most teachers maintained that they had no idea about who was representing them in the upper decision making bodies, or about who was gathering their views on the texts they use.

Moreover, this study has illustrated that the strong professional involvement which is required to bring about effective implementation of the gender goal can only be found in school, and hence teachers' involvement is of great importance. The results from interviews revealed that Tanzanian teachers do not have an influence upon all facets of the decision making and implementation processes. We saw from Chapter Five that the curriculum planner had no mechanism to obtain feedback from teachers about the curriculum. Instead, feedback regarding teachers and situations in schools came from the Ministry of Education.

All the officials who participated in the interviews agreed that not enough had been done to involve teachers in the process of evaluating and selecting the literary texts to be used in schools. One official at the Ministry also confessed that gender issues were not dealt with in sufficient depth.

Curriculum planners at Tanzania Institute of Education spoke about teachers' forums, such as Subject Associations, where teachers of one subject organise themselves and air their views about the curriculum and resources for it or about any other issue related to that particular subject. However, the official identified one major problem that these associations are characterised by: namely, they are not well-organised and so make little impact. *Chama cha Hisabati Tanzania* (Mathematics Teachers' Association) was singled out as being the only lively and organised association, whilst the rest were mainly passive.

The major criticism of the process of the selection of the texts is that the majority of education officials have not read the books and do not have considered criteria for their inclusion. It is recognised that the teaching of literature may contribute to the Millennium Development Goal Three in enhancing gender equality by promoting cultural change. However, such considerations are not informing the selection of the texts. Prominent feminist writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are not included.

The confusion about officials' roles

Moreover, from the officials' explanations, there is clearly a certain amount of confusion concerning their roles in evaluating and selecting the texts. They talked about panels responsible for the process and their functions. However, it was obvious that the Tanzania Institute of Education official (curriculum planner) was talking about a different panel to the one mentioned by the official from the Inspectorate. Clearly, the former talked about the evaluators' panel within Tanzania Institute of Education itself, whilst the latter indicated two different organs between the so-called 'English subject panel' and the larger Educational Materials Approval Committee. However, what the curriculum planner maintained is similar to what the Educational Materials Approval Committee official said, namely, that Educational Materials Approval Committee normally approves that which has been recommended by Tanzania Institute of Education. The Inspectorate official put forward the slightly different assertion that Educational Materials Approval Committee would approve whatever the 'English panel' had recommended, whereas the Manual states that it is the 'evaluators' at the Ministry of Education who are supposed to carry out the evaluation.

Even the curriculum planners, who seem to be the most prominent in selecting the literary texts, could not convincingly show that they had followed the procedures they explained in recommending the texts. For example, when I was visiting the Institute to negotiate interview appointments with officials, another official from the same department (not an interviewee) showed me a novel called *Unanswered Cries*, by Osman Conteh (2002). She said she had suggested this particular book because she liked it but did not explain why. The book is now included in the new list. But when I interviewed her colleague she said that she was not aware of that text. This raises questions about their own panel, as well as casting doubt on the criteria that is used for recommending texts. It would seem that a literary book is chosen at random by individual panel members, regardless of the book's quality or content and, more importantly, without other panel members reading it in order to evaluate and validate its suitability.

All teachers in rural schools had no idea that there was a new list for 2009 through to 2011. Good examples of this are Schools A and C, which still used the old list, whilst some of the texts used in class were out of the new list - for example, *The Great Ponds* and *Things Fall Apart*. In these schools teachers were also using the texts for the Advanced Level [Forms 5 & 6] such as *Rwanda Magere* in order to teach Form Four. Teachers in all schools were still using *Things Fall Apart*, while the newly added texts such as *Unanswered Cries*, *Wreath for Fr. Mayer*, and *Spared* were not used at all. This raised a question regarding their roles and communication between the ministry of education and the teachers or schools.

The English curriculum and lack of literature syllabus

However, as the situation unfolds from this study, it can be concluded that the English language curriculum and syllabus underpinning the teaching–learning of literature in Tanzanian secondary schools assumes a top-down approach (Hurst, 1983). This approach dictates that the policy makers and curriculum planners are responsible for carrying out any changes deemed necessary to the curriculum and the syllabus; they then ask the practitioners (thus, from the top – down) who are teachers (and students) to implement the changes. In this case, teachers were asked to include the gender goal in their daily teaching as one of the cross-cutting issues adopted by the government in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

However, by doing it this way, teachers are neither trained nor aware of the gender issues required to be included in their daily work in classrooms. The curriculum, therefore, seem to be one of the main problem areas, especially when it comes to implementing educational policies; whereas, alongside that, the curriculum officials are unaware of the specificity of the working context and the teachers’ professional needs in the Tanzanian context. This fact exemplifies the mismatch between the policies and the practice in implementing those educational policies.

The passiveness of the Gender Desk

Further, the role of the Gender Office appears to be somewhat passive, since the largest part of their work is to give advice without having the mandate to change

anything. In other words, this Office is not in a decision-making position where they can press for change and impose it on the curriculum. However, one cannot fail to be impressed by their involvement in the production of flyers and posters which promote gender equality in schools. These posters were well-designed and undoubtedly suited their intended purpose. Some of the images included in these posters showed girls and boys ‘sharing’ different jobs, which would traditionally be divided according to gender, as illustrated (see Appendices).

Resource constraints

At the moment, many secondary schools are fee paying, thus excluding many pupils from attending. Many government and private fee-paying schools have large classes and limited resources, which makes critical engagement with the texts very difficult.

Moreover, some teachers have an interest in running private tuition classes so do not want to teach well. It may be the case that the low wages they receive force them to look for other income earning alternatives, as suggested by one of the teachers during interview as pointed out in the previous chapters.

Similarities or differences between schools

In the course of observing, some cultural constraints were noted in School D, the Islamic school (see Chapter Six). It was noted that there are some faith principles which underpin and dictate the teaching and learning process in general; for instance, the implications for gender equality of the Islamic tradition or law for girls in class to cover their heads with veils and to speak in a low tone, especially as this was seen as being good moral practice for Islamic girls. This practice was confirmed later in an interview with a teacher in another school in School B. Another example can be drawn from the same school (School D). As noted earlier, when the teacher was asked why he did not challenge girls to answer his questions, thus allowing the boys to dominate the class, he responded that he did not want to “harass” the girls. This was not the case to the other schools. There was no such direct exclusion of girls from participating in the discussion for the reason pointed out by the teacher in School D.

Further, the difference between private and government schools was evident in terms of amenities. As noted in Chapter Six, School E, for example, had a few pupils in one class with enough books allowing class management for the teacher and discussion among the groups successful. There were few anomalies, for example, when the teacher in School E divided the class into groups of girls and boys as pointed out earlier. However, this was not the case for all private schools. In School D, for example, the class I observed had 67 students, the opposite of what was expected in a private school.

Findings from observations reveal that government schools suffer most from the lack of teaching resources. However, although government schools were observed as still being far from being equal in terms of resources when compared to academies such as School E, those in urban Tanzania such as Schools B and F are better off than those in rural areas, as exemplified by Schools A and C, whose reliance on the school to provide materials is total. It was also revealed that although there had been a reduction in school fees in government schools, the parents were still expected to cover other expenses such as school uniforms, and reading and writing materials, at a cost which many in rural Tanzania could not afford. In urban government schools, however, most parents could afford to buy copies of the prescribed texts for their children.

Moreover, private schools also differ from each other. An academy such as School E can be quite different from that of School D, which resembles a government school in many respects. In addition, all teachers in the schools observed, except the teacher in School E, engaged in a lot of writing on the board, whilst students jotted down what was written there. This was encouraged by the nature of the classes which often had in excess of 50 students, except for School E which had an allocation of 30 students per class.

Regarding girls' versus boys' views on African traditional practices, surprisingly, however, some girls thought practices like the dowry should be retained whilst boys were against it, just like the character, Sidi, the girl in *The Lion and the Jewel*, who also advocated it and Lankunle, the man who opposed it. This raises the question of

how a culture can be changed, especially when a practice is undesirable. It may be the case that the dowry practice is seen as unacceptable to many Tanzanians today. So it was surprising that girls were not more radical than boys in their views and hence the question was not about which gender supported the traditions but rather depended on the techniques used by their in the classroom to encourage critical discussion of the matter. Since the bride price featured in some of the texts studied like *Three Suitors*, *One Husband*, *Is It Possible?* and *The Lion and the Jewel*, teachers could have encouraged critical discussion of the issue, but there was little evidence of this. However, girls were also sometimes quite radical in their views for example girls in School E condemned the use of prostitutes as depicted in *Passed Like a Shadow*. This was the only school which studied this book.

The following are recommendations prompted by this study that might help to bring about some of the changes required.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward for practical action:

Improvement in teacher training and improvement of teaching methods and repertoire

A major focus of this study was to explore the gender representations and to understand how Tanzanian teachers and students make sense of the African literary texts they study, many of which reflect the gender relations of an earlier era.

As emphasized elsewhere in this study, teachers need to be trained on how to include gender issues in the classroom context. It is the Ministry of Education's role to ensure teachers receive proper training for the job. Since the officials claimed that In-Service Training courses (INSET) were not possible due to a lack of funds, teachers should be given the opportunity for such training in their teachers' colleges. The Ministry needs to prepare the syllabi to that end.

The Ministry could also adopt other measures such as organising conferences and courses on the teaching of literature with a gender perspective. Teachers attending such courses could learn new methods and communicate these to colleagues.

Through this approach, many teachers could, with time, be trained and the application of teaching methods could be maximised at a national level.

Further, the Ministry could prepare manuals to be distributed to schools to act as guidance to teaching. Such manuals would provide guidance to teachers on the following: how to analyse the literature texts using a gender-focused approach; how to be gender sensitive throughout the teaching process; how to deconstruct traditional gender roles assigned to male and female characters, and correct misconceptions; and how to use gender inclusive language and generic terms, so that students can be invited to discuss their views accordingly.

Curriculum change

The curriculum needs to change, especially regarding the selection of the literary texts. I am not advocating dropping all the texts written in the 1960s, since every literary canon will include texts written at different times, for example in the United Kingdom many schools still study Shakespeare, and other texts from times past. However, more recent texts should be included on the basis that they offer a different perspective to many of the current texts which have obvious traditional gender representations.

Creation of the literature syllabus

The current situation is that literature is a component of the English language syllabus and it is thus not treated as a discipline in its own right, except in the case of some private schools. This study argues that there is a need to have a literature syllabus in its own right. Such a syllabus would allow a much wider exposure of the teaching and learning of literature, especially as time could be given to the study of its different genres: namely, poetry, drama and prose.

Given the need to involve students in literary criticism, policy makers need to understand that literature is not merely about appreciation of the texts (as described by the Educational Materials Approval Committee official in Chapter Five), but rather it requires intelligent reading, understanding of meaning, and developing an awareness of literary forms and content through active and critical engagement with

the texts by both students and teachers. These activities require sufficient time to be allocated to the subject. Such a syllabus should be well equipped with texts written by both male and female authors, by Tanzanian and non-Tanzanians, and would include older texts and recent ones to provide the opportunity for a wider exploration and critical approach to the subject. The number of Tanzanian writers, in particular, should be increased. While Tanzania is rich in novelists, playwrights and poets who use both English (see Mwaifuge, 2009) and Kiswahili, it is surprising that only three such writers are included at the secondary lower level and only two on the list of texts for advanced secondary level. However, this is at least a step forward as prior to the 2009 list there were no Tanzanian authors included, the majority were West African.

Teachers' participation in selecting the literary texts and constructing the curriculum

Given the constraints explained earlier in this chapter about lack of teachers' participation in matters related to the texts they use in schools, the current study suggests that the deliberate inclusion of teachers on the selection panels relating to the selection of literary texts at the Ministry of Education and at the Tanzania Institute of Education should be exercised as soon as this can be done.

There should also be a clear structure created to explain any curriculum changes to teachers, and a further mechanism established to train them regarding those changes; opportunities for teachers to give their views and opinions on the curriculum should also be regularly provided.

Funds and additional resourcing of secondary schools

Since the launch of Secondary Education Development Plan in 2004, there has been some expansion, but many schools are still under-funded. As noted earlier, teachers claimed that they are not trained to include gender in teaching. Funding has been capitalised as the major reason for not giving orientations to teachers, as it would require seminars, workshops and courses. Devoting a greater share of Tanzania's GDP to secondary education is clearly of great importance. Moreover, the government needs to motivate teachers with good pay and incentives.

Demarcating and strictly adhering to officials' roles

Regarding the confusion of who does what among officials concerning the teaching of literature, this study concludes that unless these roles are more thoroughly demarcated, and unless members strictly follow the rules regarding the procedures for selecting the literary texts, then such confusion will undoubtedly continue to persist. As a result, no one will be held responsible for failed outcomes as the responsibility for error will be directed to another office. The future of education, and especially the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Tanzania, depends on the credibility of these important departments at the Ministry.

Moreover, as Educational Materials Approval Committee deals with all the texts used in all subjects in schools and colleges, it would be useful to have teacher representatives of each subject as members of the committee. Having Directors of Secondary Education or evaluators appointed by Educational Materials Approval Committee who might not be able to read each single text found in the list, despite being former or professionally-trained teachers themselves, would certainly inhibit the correct evaluation of the texts. A good example of having specific evaluators for specific subjects is shown by the Tanzania Institute of Education and the Inspectorate offices; the two officials interviewed were specifically from the English department, which includes literature in its remit, and they seemed more conversant in answering questions related to literature and gender than the other two. I could not trace the real 'evaluators' of the texts to interview them as it was said that the Educational Materials Approval Committee Secretariat had the final say in selection of texts.

A broader role for the Gender Desk

Rather than being there to offer advice to the curriculum planners and the inspectorate office regarding gender issues, there is a need for this office to be given a mandate for decision-making, and be more proactive in promoting gender equality.

The elimination of corrupt practices

There is a need to improve teachers' commitment to the school which employs them and the pupils they serve. As noted earlier, teachers sometimes withhold knowledge

from pupils so that parents will pay for additional classes after school whereby only few parents can afford that. Such practices need to be eliminated, since they are damaging the quality of education delivered to all pupils.

Recommendations for further research

Teaching and learning practices in faith schools

The present study included one Islamic school (School D), although it had no prior aim to compare it with a Christian school such as School E, which is a private school owned by a Christian, but is not primarily known as a Christian school. It was not the aim of this study to explore the issues surrounding faith schools.

It was noted that girls in the Islamic school were not encouraged to contribute to class discussion, and there is a need to investigate further the relationship between the teaching of religious beliefs in faith schools and the promotion of gender equality.

Examinations

Future research might examine the part which a progressive assessment system might have in encouraging gender critiques within literature, encouraging pupils to engage in deep thinking and discouraging superficial and instrumental responses.

Authors

This study did not interview the authors of the literary texts in question. It is therefore recommended that other researchers undertake the task of questioning writers. Chapter Four offers a critical textual analysis in order to explore what the authors were intending to convey to the audience, thus the face-to-face interviewing of authors might reveal more details of what their intended message was.

Parents

There is a need for research which examines the attitudes of parents towards gender equality within the society and their views on the potential contribution of literature teaching to achieving social and cultural change.

Other researchers might be interested in interviewing parents to see if they had read any of the texts studied by their children at school, and if these texts have had any influence on their children regarding the messages they acquire from them; in addition, it would be interesting to discover whether the messages the author intended have had any influence on the manner in which the parents have raised their children.

Limitations of the study

As it is perhaps unrealistic, if not impossible, for a single study to attempt to cover all the different genres of literature studied in secondary schools, this study focused mainly on the textual analysis of the texts used by teachers and students of literature in Tanzania, and observed only six teachers, one lesson by each teacher, as well as interviewing policy makers, teachers and students. However, the study did not observe teachers in a series of their lessons and therefore captures a snapshot in time. This was because schools were preparing themselves for examinations which had been postponed in November and December due to a national teachers' strike. The teachers were protesting against bad teaching conditions and low pay (as explained in Chapter Three). Thus, when the schools resumed in mid-January they were not, as one might expect, very amenable to accommodating researchers within their schedules. It was their busiest time of the year and they had just lost the previous two months to the strike.

Conclusion

As noted by Makombe et al. (2010), since the 1990s there has been a commitment in Tanzania to expand and improve secondary education in order to provide young people with knowledge and skills for employment and build a more socially cohesive society. In addition, it has been recognised that secondary education must play a role in developing 'national unity, identity and ethics, personal integrity, respect for and readiness to work, human rights, cultural and moral values, customs, traditions and civic responsibilities and obligations' (MoEC, 1995: 6).

If Tanzania is to be successful in achieving the Millennium Development Goal Three relating to gender equality, it is clear that social change has to go beyond improving

enrolment and attendance in primary and secondary schools. The teaching of literature in secondary schools offers great opportunities for teachers and students to engage in critical explorations of their culture both historically and its present form. Analysing the constructions and performance of masculinity and femininity is clearly central to achieving cultural change which is necessary to underpin social and economic development.

Problems facing Tanzania, such as poverty and HIV/AIDS, can be better understood through examining gender discourses which pervade culture, including literature. The fight against poverty, for instance, requires efforts to understand the cultural mechanisms that create uncertainties and dependency. Unequal relationships between men and women create high levels of dependency and low levels of self-esteem among women who lack the power to make decisions. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, there are currently major problems in the teaching of literature in Tanzanian secondary schools, including in the analysis of gender. However, students' interest in this area and their willingness to engage in serious debate was clearly evident. Tanzanian secondary schools, and the teachers within them, now need to rise to the challenge of delivering a stimulating and critical curriculum, including the study of gender discourses through literature.

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APPENDICES

A: Information flyer

Gender Representations in English literature texts in Tanzanian Secondary Schools

I am a second year PhD student who is a holder of a Commonwealth Scholarship award studying at the University of Edinburgh in the UK. I am undertaking research on representations of gender in English literature texts currently used in Tanzanian secondary schools. I am developing an analytical framework for my research which focuses on the construction and transmission of culture through the medium of literature

Specifically, this study addresses the following questions:

- 1 How is gender represented in literature in the English texts currently used in Tanzanian secondary schools?
- 2 How is gender addressed in the process of teaching and learning literature in the Tanzanian secondary school classroom context?
- 3 What are the views and perceptions of students, teachers, curriculum planners and policy makers about such portrayals/constructs against the broader objectives of literature laid out in the curriculum?

This research involves classroom observations in order to determine the cultural, social and economic context in which learning takes place. Further, my research involves interviewing literature teachers and students, being the key practitioners and implementers of the literature curriculum and policy. In my write-up and dissemination of the findings, all information would be anonymised, and neither the school nor any individual would be named.

In the light of the aforesaid, therefore, I write to ask you if you could possibly assist me do the needful by discussing with you the procedures to follow in seeking parents' permission to interview their children at school. I would be grateful if you could be able, in your tight schedules, to assist. For further information regarding my research, please do not hesitate to contact me on e-mail: sekwiha@yahoo.co.uk

Phone: +255 787 346889

Thank you.

Signature.

B: Consent form

This is to confirm that I have read the accompanying information flyer of this study and my involvement as a participant in the study and that I agree to take part in this study. I have been informed of my rights regarding my participation prior to the research getting underway. These include: confidential and anonymous treatment of all information provided by me, unless I willingly waive this right in writing; and the right to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, at any time.

Name.....


Date.....

Signature.....

Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT)
GENDER FRIENDLY SCHOOL CAMPAIGN

What makes a Gender friendly school?

- “Opportunities for both girls and boys to play sports”
- “Separate and private toilets”
- “All students are actively involved in learning”
- “Teachers who encourage excellence for all girls and boys”
- “Classrooms where everyone participates equally”
- “Welcoming environment where all pupils feel safe”



For more information about **Gender Friendly Schools**
Contact the **Gender Desk - Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT)**
P.O. Box 9121 Dar es Salaam Tanzania or visit our website www.moec.go.tz

D: Observation schedule

Observation schedule for teachers and students (Partly adapted from Scrivener's 2005 model)

Mode of teaching applied	Delivering the lesson	Interaction setting	Students' activities	Physical setting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participatory (involves teacher & students; see Malawi Institute of Education: 2005) enquiry (students as partners in the process with their existing knowledge & experience; Kahn & O'Rourke: 2005) teacher centred (eg lecture) student centred (students' needs direct the methods employed) activity based (eg. discussion, role play) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> resources introducing/developing the text type of gender questions asked questions directed to which gender gender images students and teacher agree and/ or disagree with? discussion on language use author's biography & point of view about gender relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formal informal teacher to students students to teacher students to students in pairs in groups one student (or the teacher) reads aloud non-verbal interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reading speaking writing listening role playing & dramatisation discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> describe how girls&boys are seated, space, light, air, the board, equipment describe appearance of girls & boys e.g. their clothes & posture how do female & male teachers project themselves the general atmosphere in the classroom

E: Topic guides for interviews

Interview guide for policy makers

- 1 Would you tell me which educational policy guides the teaching of literature in secondary schools?
- 2 What criteria do use in selecting the literary texts for form four?
- 3 Do you involve teachers in the process of selecting the texts and in educational policy making or evaluating? How?
- 4 Considering the UN Millennium Development Goal 3: *to promote gender equality*, do you think there is gender equality being taught in secondary school literature classes? Please explain your response.
- 5 What mechanisms do you use to ensure conformity between the policy and its implementation?
- 6 Thinking of any one of the texts used in the Form Three Literature course, how would you describe gender representations?
- 7 What are your views toward these gender representations?
- 8 Do you think that these gendered images are likely to play in shaping Tanzania's social, political and economic culture? Please elaborate your answer

Interview guide for curriculum planners

- 1 What guidance is given to you in designing the literature curriculum? Where does this guidance come from?
- 2 What are the core social issues in literature curriculum?
- 3 Thinking of any one of the texts used in the Form Four Literature course, Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* for instance (or any other text), how would you describe the gender representations?
- 4 What are your views toward these gender representations?
- 5 What criteria do you use for choosing texts for form four level?
- 6 What is your criterion for retaining/changing or dropping texts over time?

7 Do you involve teachers of such changes? How?

Interview guide for teachers

I would like to begin by asking you the following general information

General information:

1 Name (optional).....

2 (Male/ Female)

3 Would you tell me, how long have you been teaching literature?

.....Months or Years

4 Which texts have you covered in class so far?

5 Do you encourage students to discuss and consider the way gender roles have been portrayed or constructed in the texts? If so, how? If not, why not?

6 Do you assist students to reflect on what they have read about the characters' gender roles and respond to the messages they have received? If so, why? How?

7 Thinking of any text which is used in the Form Fourour Literature course, how would you describe the gender representations?

8 What are your views about gender representation in the texts?

9. Are you involved in selecting the texts?

Interview guide for students

I would like to begin by asking you the following general information

General information:

1 Name (optional)

2 Age

3 School

4 (Female/ Male)

5 Would you like to begin by telling me which books you have read this term/ year?

6 Which book was your favourite? Why?

7 Do you think you are being assisted in class to understand gender representations in the books? How?

8 Do you feel that you are given enough time and chance to read and relate the books to the real world surrounding you about gender issues? How?

9 Do you feel any of the books tell you that you should act in a certain way according to your gender? Please explain your answer.